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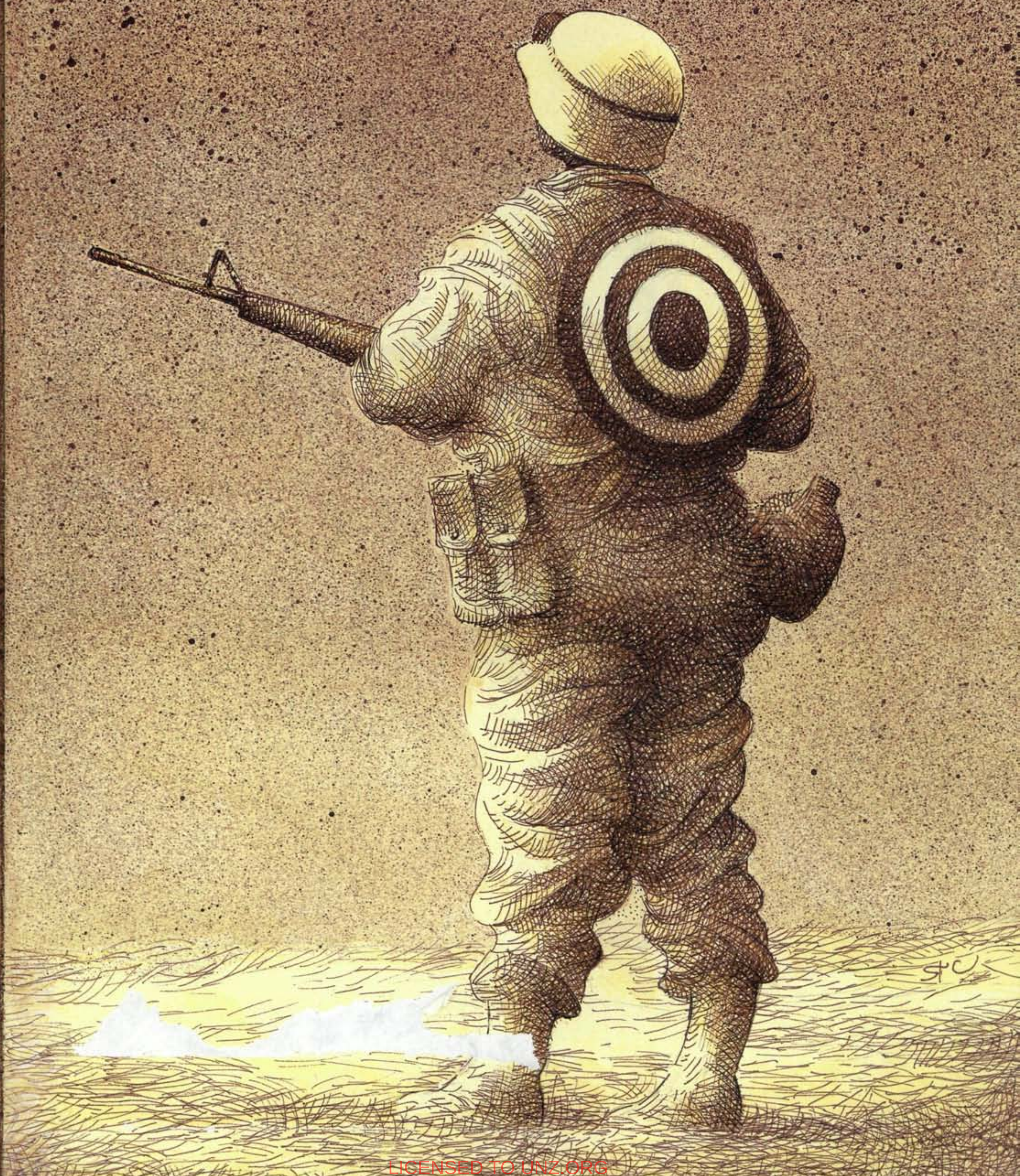
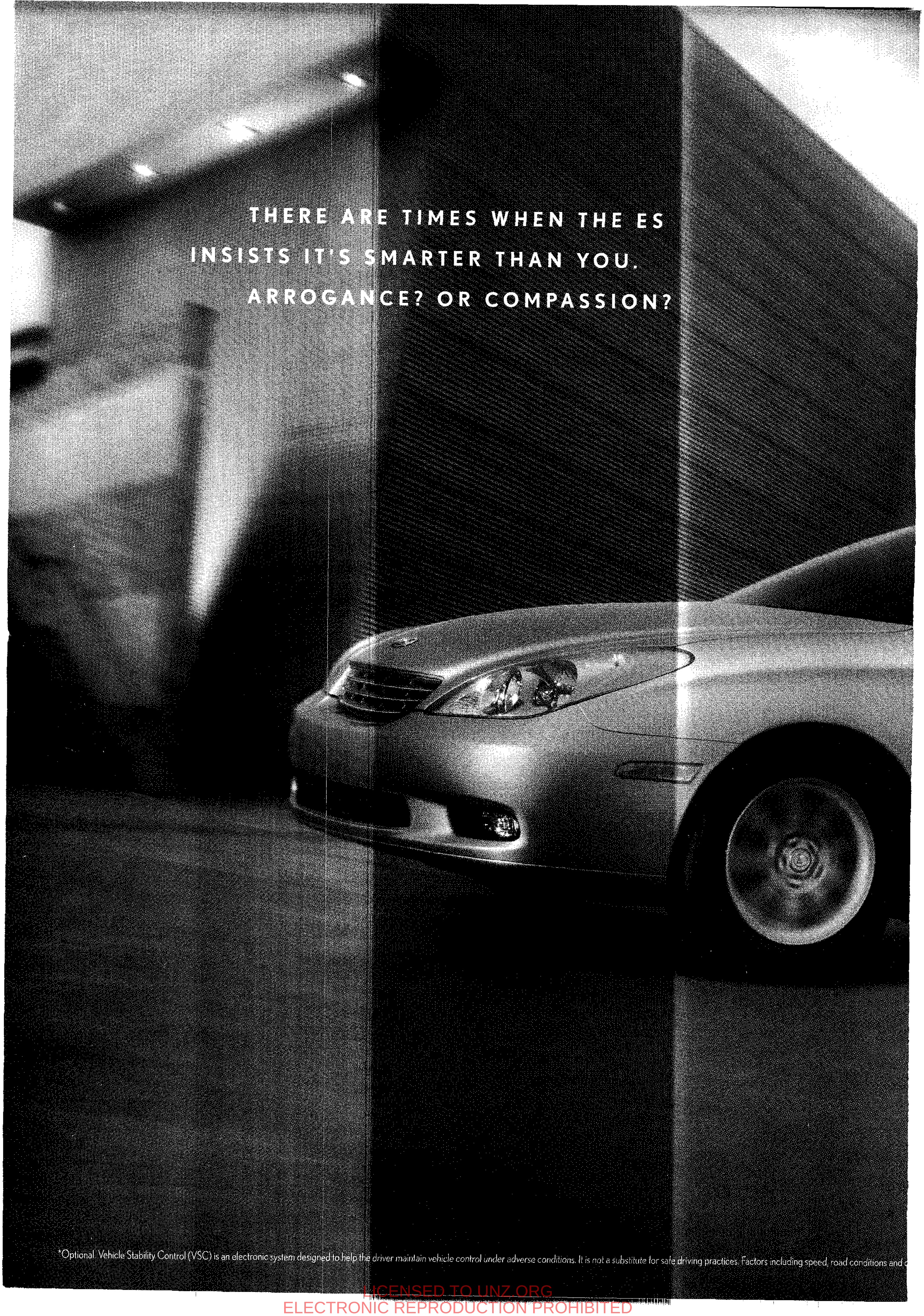
THE NEW YORKER

MAY 24, 2004

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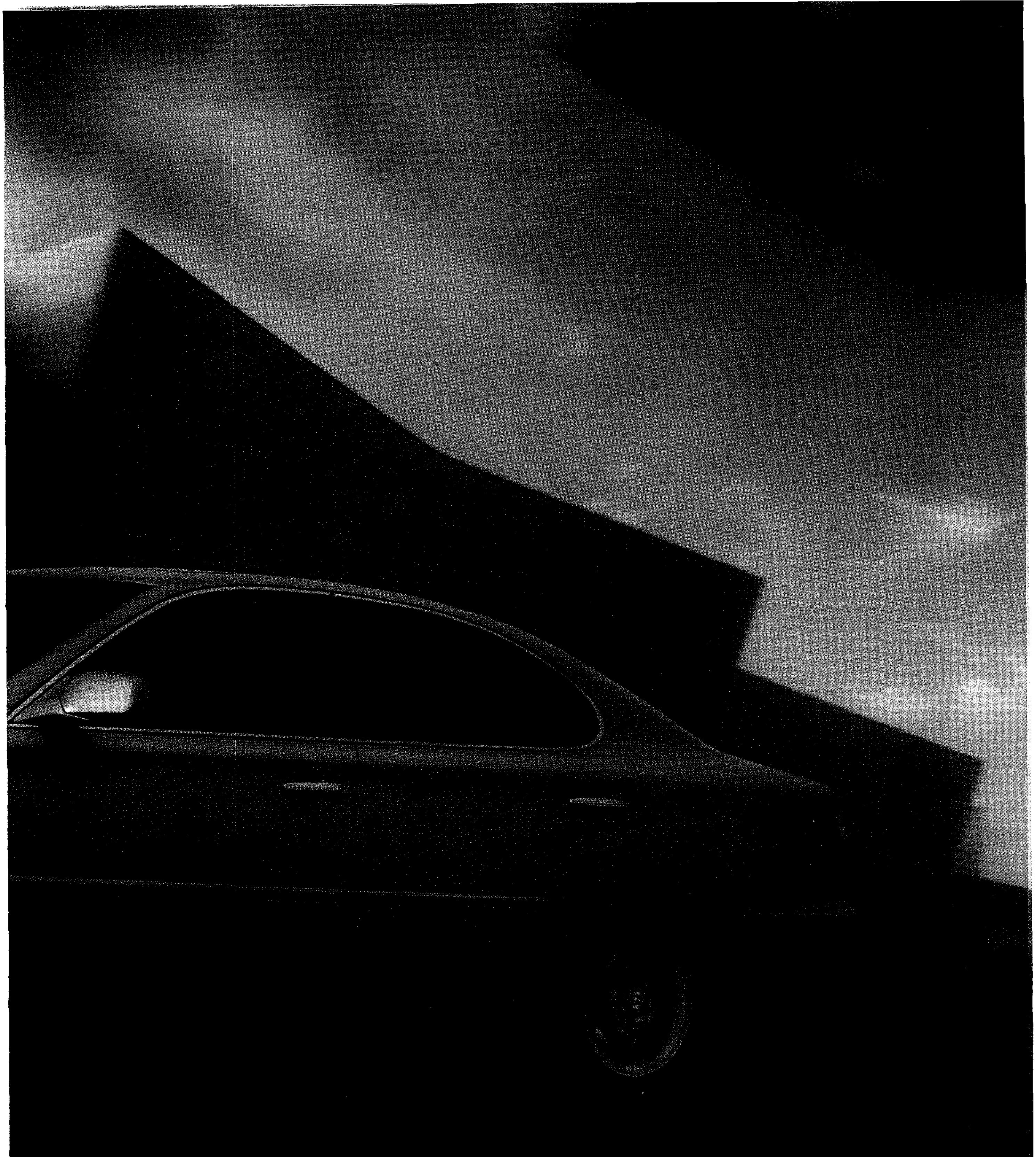As a car dedicated to your safety as well as your comfort, sometimes the ES takes upon itself certain liberties. Suppose, for example, that you take a corner too fast and begin to slide. Sensors will intervene and, by applying one or more brakes and even reducing the throttle, can help return you to your proper "arc" through the corner.* At which point the ES can then return to what it does best–leaving the driving to you. A gesture that, in our minds, is decidedly compassionate. **THE ES 330**

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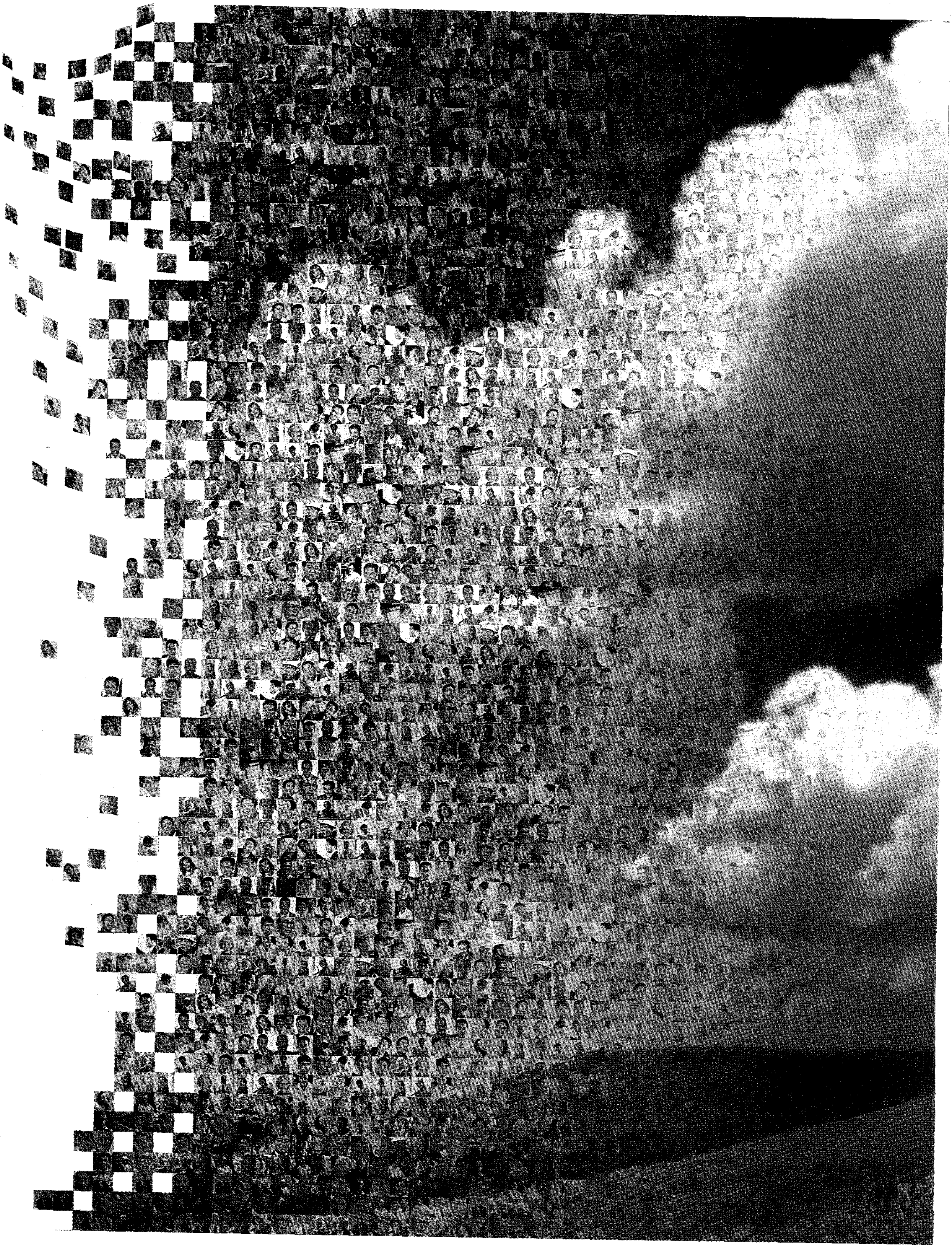

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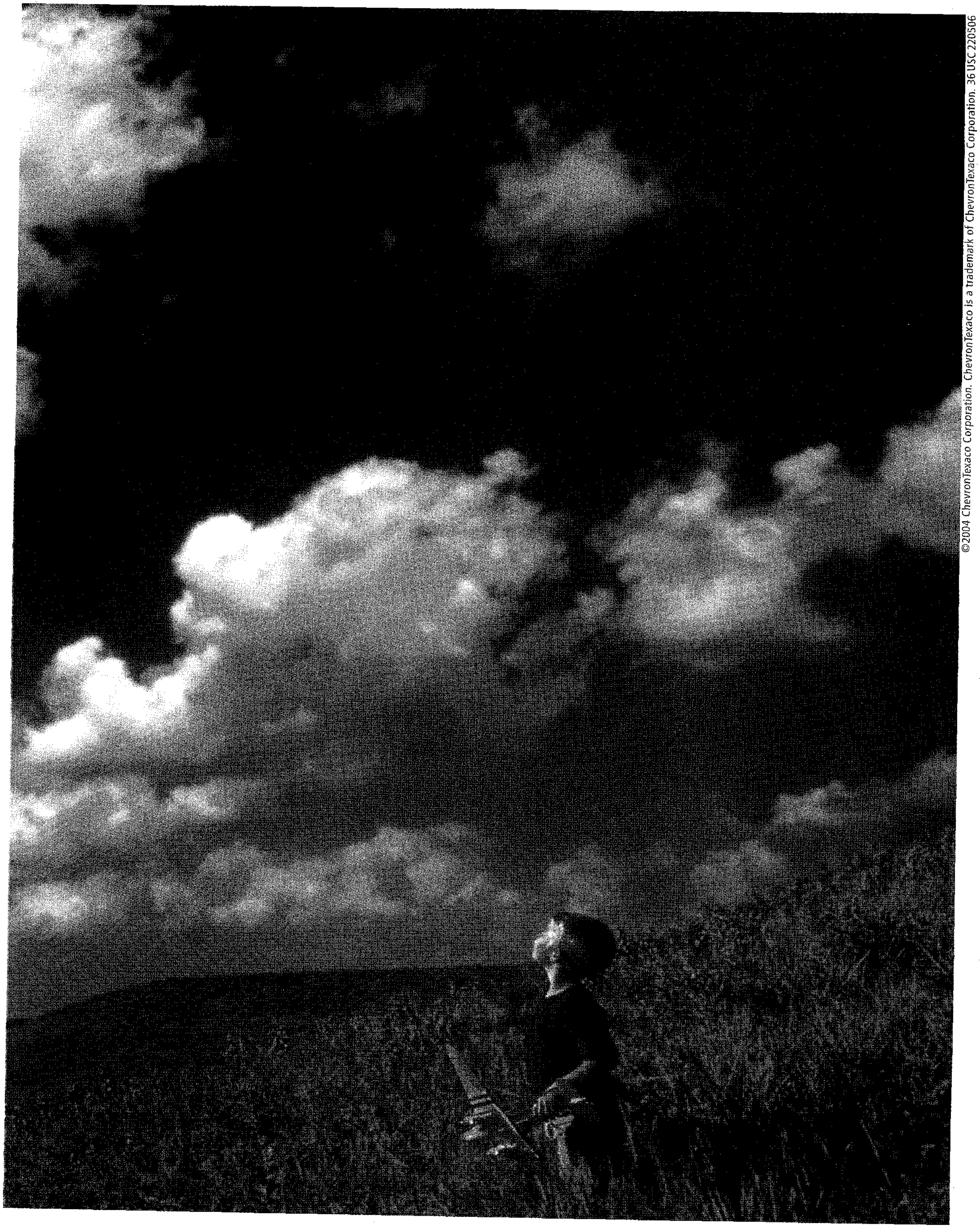

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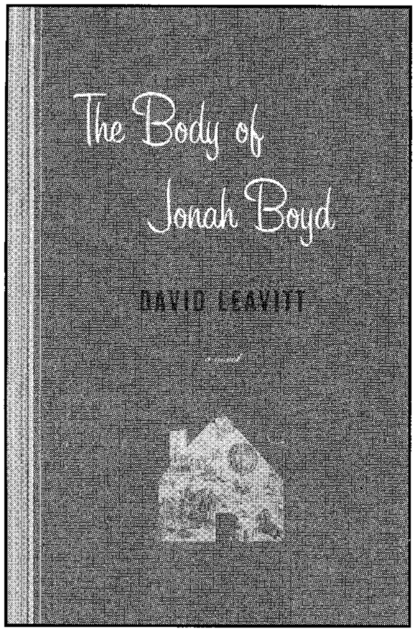

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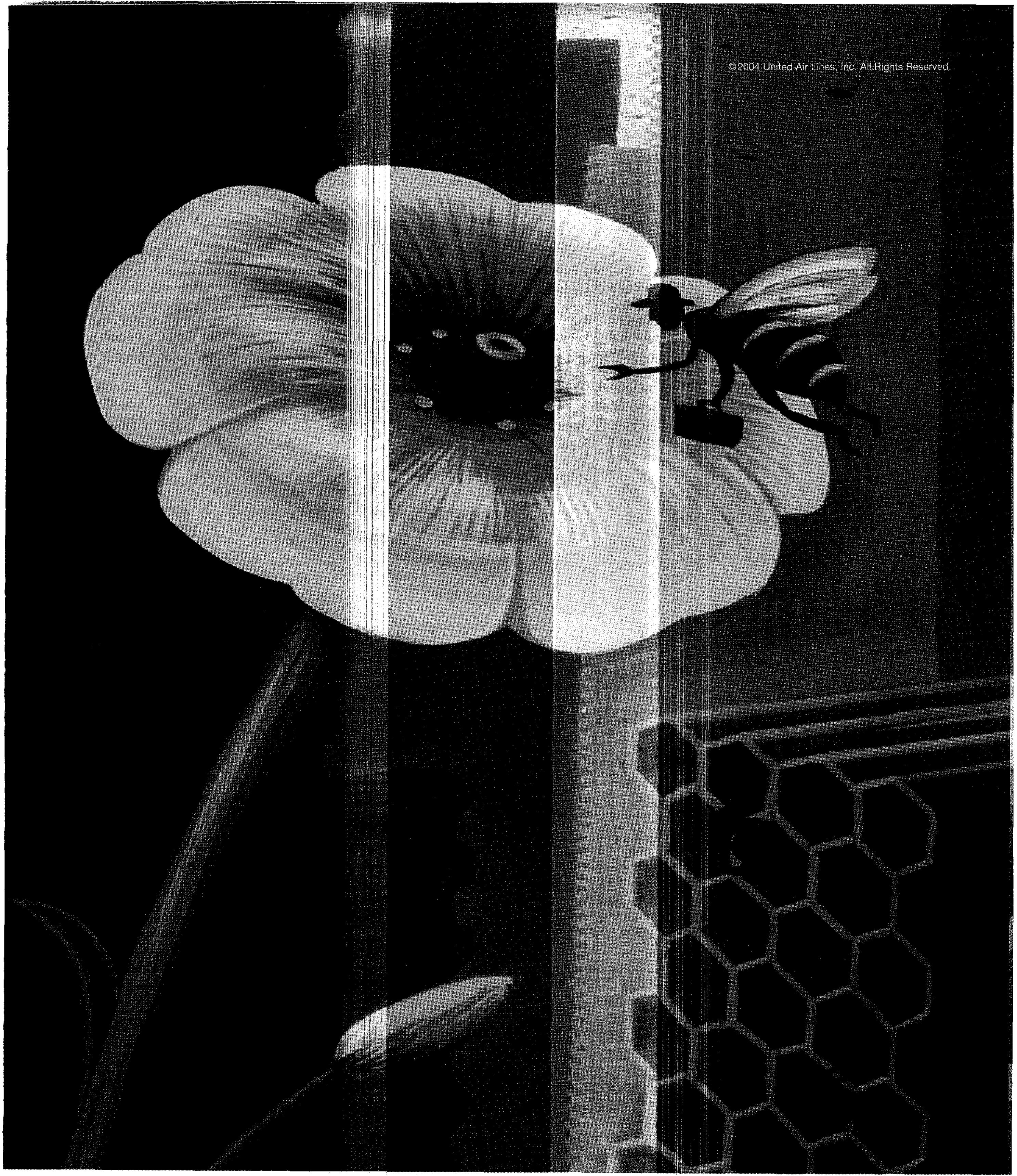
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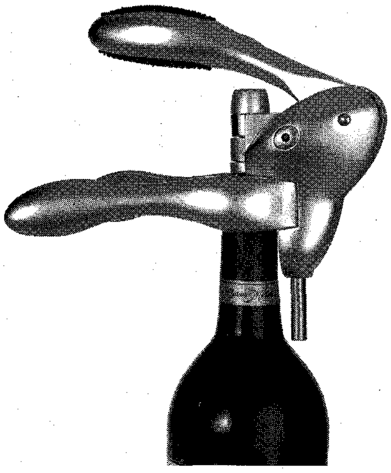

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CONTRIBUTORS

Seymour M. Hersh ("The Gray Zone," p. 38) won a 1970 Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the My Lai massacre. His pieces on the misuse of intelligence won the National Magazine Award for public-interest journalism this month.

David Grann ("The Squid Hunter," p. 56) is a staff writer.

Ian Frazier (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 45) is a longtime contributor. A collection of his pieces about New York City will be published next spring.

Jeffrey Frank ("Riches of Embarrassment," p. 46), a senior editor at the magazine, is the author of "The Columnist" and "Bad Publicity."

Leo Carey (The Talk of the Town, p. 36) is a member of the magazine's editorial staff.

Robert Mezey (Poem, p. 58) has published seven books of poems. He won the Nicholas Roerich Poets' Prize in 2002 for "Collected Poems: 1952-1999."

Jhumpa Lahiri (Fiction, p. 72) is the author of "Interpreter of Maladies," a collection of stories, for which she received a Pulitzer Prize. Her latest book is "The Namesake," a novel.

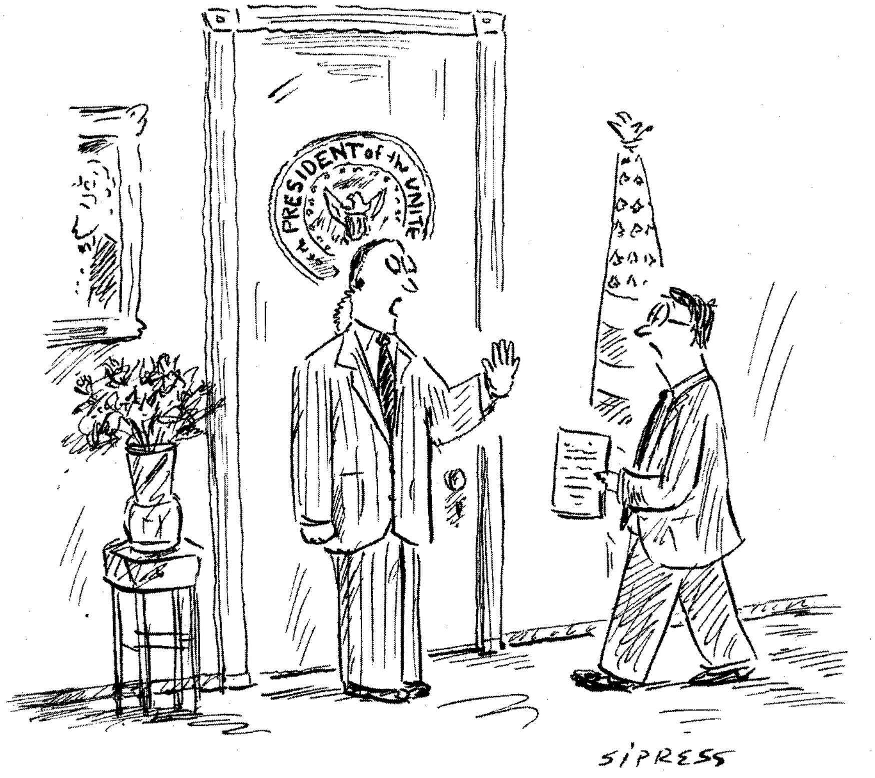
Nicholas Lemann (The Wayward Press, p. 82) is the dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and a staff writer.

Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 88) is the magazine's pop-music critic.

Paul Goldberger (The Sky Line, p. 90) has been named dean of the Parsons School of Design. His book "Up from Zero: Architecture, Politics, and the Rebuilding of New York" comes out in September.

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 94) is a literary and dance critic for the magazine.

Paul Slansky (The Back Page, p. 98) is the author of "The George W. Bush Quiz Book," which has just been published. ♦



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THE MAIL

THE ABU GHRAIB SCANDAL

If, as President George W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld would have us believe, the perpetrators of physical and sexual abuse at American military prisons in Iraq are just a few "bad apples," then the catastrophic impact of this story, as reported by Seymour M. Hersh, might eventually dissipate ("Torture at Abu Ghraib," May 10th, and "Chain of Command," May 17th). But circumstances point to guidance from more senior levels of the military, and to complicity at high levels of the Bush Administration. Even if our government is truly innocent of encouraging torture, our leaders have caused us to pay enormously for their incompetence. The abuse reports were sitting on their desks for weeks, but it wasn't until the photographs were revealed to the public, in late April, that they reacted in an effective way. Their decisions have left us less secure and more reviled.

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.

From the inception of the Iraq war, I thought that our country had wrongly rushed into the conflict. However, I subscribed to the argument that, with the regime of Saddam Hussein toppled, we could not withdraw our troops and leave the country to anarchy. After reading Hersh's article, I have lost faith in this argument. I now believe that the Iraqi people would be better served if we left them to cope with anarchy on their own rather than continuing to subject them to torture and humiliation at the hands of our military. The exposure of systematic torture at Abu Ghraib will surely kill any remaining traces of support for the American-led invasion and occupation among Iraqis. The report certainly killed mine.

Adam Hunninghake
Chicago, Ill.

The failure of the Pentagon to confront the abuse at Abu Ghraib cannot be separated from larger political decisions: the unwillingness to accept the International Criminal Court, in The Hague; the disregard for the Geneva conventions; the detention of prisoners at Guantánamo and the denial of their legal rights; the distortion of facts in order to win consent from the public to go to war against Iraq. Step by step, one could watch as ethics and morals were eroded. Irreversible damage has been done to democracy. I hope that investigations into the abuse which are now under way will be the beginning of a broader public debate, not only in the United States but around the world.

Christine Kirchhoff
Frankfurt, Germany

While I do not condone the abuse of Iraqi prisoners, I understand its context. There was an obvious leadership breakdown. Letting the investigation play out and punishment be applied will illustrate the limitations that the United States imposes on conduct during a war. However, it is poor journalism for Hersh to have published his report at a time when the world is a tinderbox. Every word that gives encouragement to extremists plays into their hands. Those in the armed services, who have paid for the right to free speech, deserve better.

Walter F. Emerson
Captain, U.S. Army Special Forces (Ret.)
North Olmsted, Ohio

The affair of the photographs of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib forced into grotesque poses may be seen as a metaphor for our country's wider imbroglio in Iraq: soldiers posing as liberators; reservists made to look like soldiers, when, in fact, they have become targets; and untrained citizen-soldiers playing at prison guard—posing for the images that will ultimately bring them down.

Arthur Comings
San Anselmo, Calif.

•

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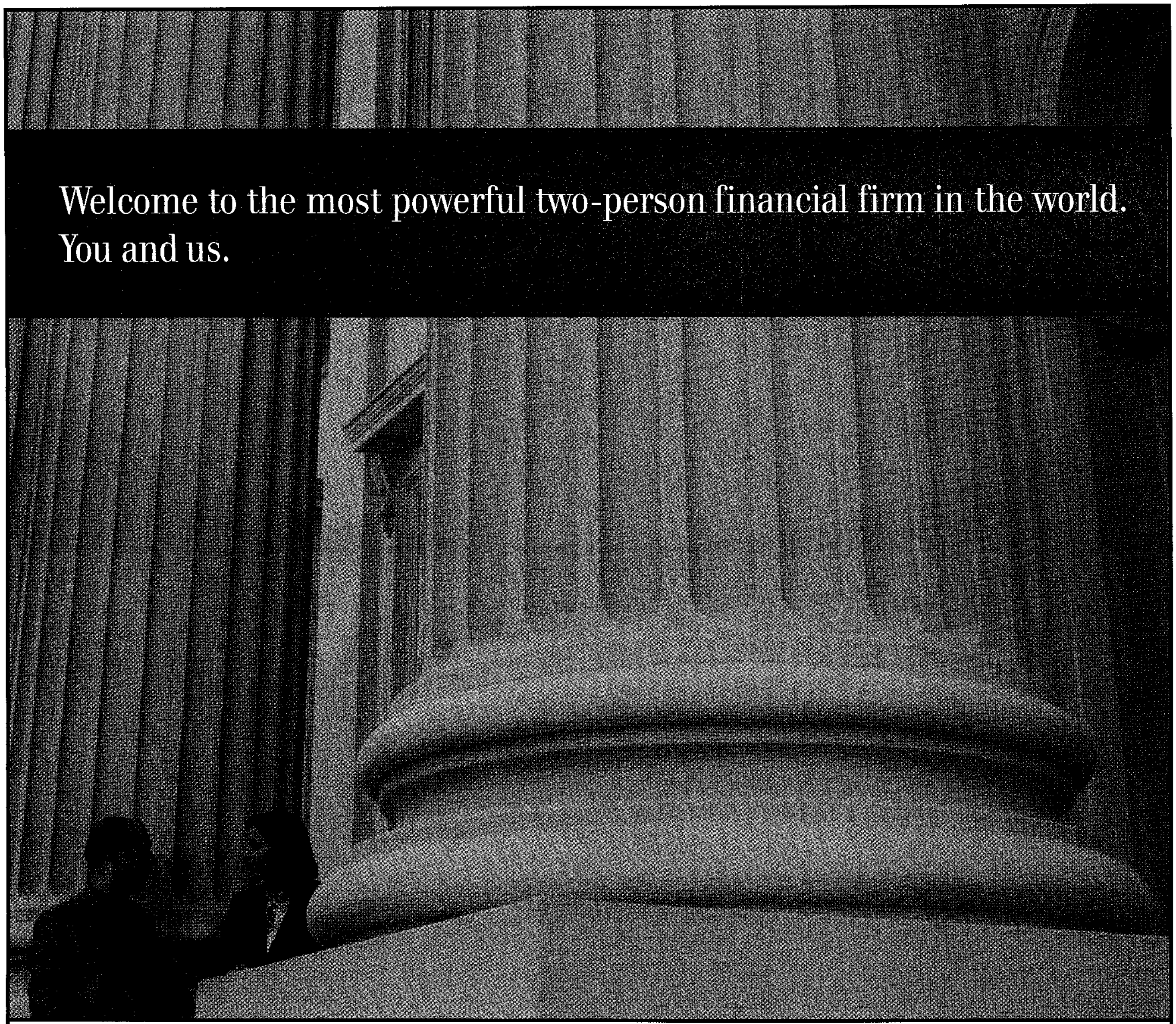
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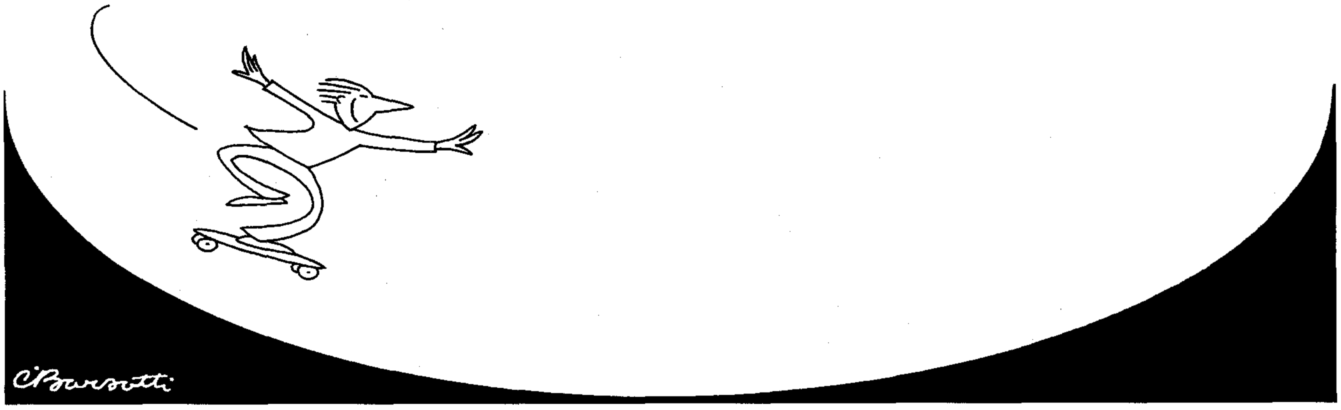

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

THE RULES OF ATTRACTION

The dour Yonkers native Stephin Merritt formed the art-pop band Magnetic Fields in 1990, and a decade later won acclaim for the witty, wry, and persistently melancholy triple album "69 Love Songs." Since then, Merritt has made detours into other bands, including the Gothic Archies and Future Bible Heroes; written music for the indie film "Pieces of April"; and scored an English-language production of the Chinese opera "Orphan of Zhao." The new Magnetic Fields record, "i," is a typically lovesick affair. This week, Merritt and his band perform their new material, more than two years after their last live appearance. (Town Hall, May 20-21; see Night Life.)

PLAY A SONG CYCLE FOR ME

Eyebrows, and a few hackles, were raised when the American composer John Corigliano announced that he would compose a song cycle set to the lyrics of various Bob Dylan songs—songs that Corigliano insisted he had never heard before. The result, "Mr. Tambourine Man," is one of the composer's most poignant works, a threnody on war and a lament on the passing of time. The Brooklyn Philharmonic gives the New York première of the cycle's orchestral version, with the stratospheric soprano Hila Plitmann as soloist. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, May 22; see Classical Music.)

MODIGLIANI RETURNS

There hasn't been a major Modigliani show in New York since the MOMA retrospective in 1951. "Modigliani: Beyond the Myth" gathers more than eighty of the Master's sensuous and elegant figures in paintings, sculptures, and drawings. The exhibit is part of the Jewish Museum's centennial festivities, and the curators have focussed on an often neglected aspect of Modigliani's short, self-destructive life: his heritage as an Italian Sephardic Jew. (Jewish Museum, opens May 21; see Art.)

"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth," at the Jewish Museum.

Stephin Merritt and the Magnetic Fields perform at Town Hall.

John Corigliano's song cycle set to the lyrics of Bob Dylan, at BAM.

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

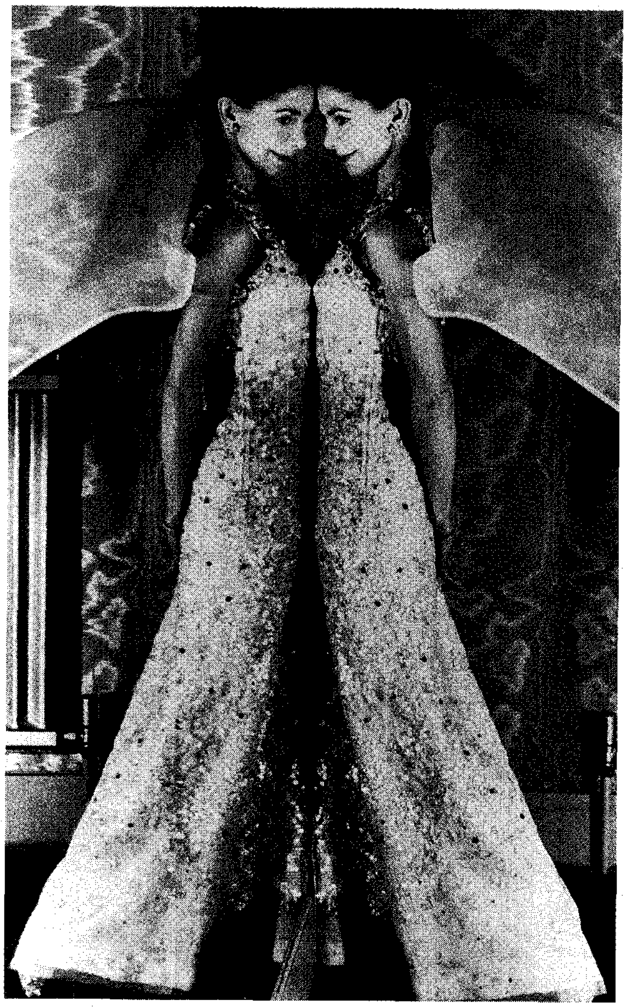
CHINESE FRIENDS
A Chinese strategy game serves as an allegory for a competition between a son and his estranged father, in a new play by Jon Robin Baitz. Directed by Robert Egan. With sets by Santo Loquasto and lighting by Donald Holder. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

HERE LIES JENNY
Bebe Neuwirth stars in a musical performance that weaves together the music of Kurt Weill and lyrics by Bertolt Brecht, Ira Gershwin, Langston Hughes, and Alan Jay Lerner (among others). Choreographed by Ann Reinking and directed by Roger Rees, with musical direction by Leslie Stifelman. In previews. (Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

LIGHT RAISE THE ROOF
A new play by Kia Corthron, about a man who struggles to find housing for the homeless during a freezing winter. Michael John Garcés directs. One preview on May 19. Opens May 20 at 7. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

OTHELLO
The Aquila Theatre Company presents a new production, set on a British military base on Cyprus. Part of the audience sits among the actors, in the middle of the stage. Starring Lloyd Notice as Othello and Anthony Cochrane as Iago. Directed and adapted by Robert Richmond. In previews. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

SIGHT UNSEEN
Laura Linney stars in a revival of Donald Margulies's play about a successful but lonely artist who looks up an old flame. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. In previews. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)


The life and career of the ballerina Margot Fonteyn are honored in an exhibition at Lincoln Center (see Dance).

NORMAN PARKINSON/CORBIS SYGMA

OPENED RECENTLY

ASSASSINS
The Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical about nine marginalized souls who each took aim at an American President is well sung, gorgeous to look at, and meticulous in its detail. But it has been freighted with more weight than it can properly carry. This dark cartoon—a kind of glib carnival of carnage—was first performed in 1991, at the beginning of the Gulf War, and was meant to have its Broadway début just after September 11, 2001. The delay of more than two years has not helped the show's karma or its message. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/3/04.) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOMBAY DREAMS
One of the silliest musicals in recent memory. In this British import, the "scum from the slum" Akaash (the hardworking Manu Narayan) gets discovered by a zaftig Bollywood diva, Rani (the hard-shaking Ayesha Dharker), and becomes a star. Over the course of nine production numbers, Akaash briefly forgets his roots, but not, unfortunately, the lyrics, by Don Black, including those of the show's hit song, "Shakalaka Baby," whose most eloquent passage goes, "Shakalaka baby shakalaka baby / Come and shakalaka with me." Deep Singh's and David Sharma's percussion is excellent, but when you find yourself watching the drummers at the side of the stage instead of the exotic nubile hordes giving good cleavage in front of you, there's a problem. (5/10/04) (Broadway, 1681 Broadway, at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BOY
In a play by Julia Jordan, a new arrival in a small town (T. R. Knight) forms a complicated friendship with a local man (Kelly AuCoin). Directed by Joe Calarco. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 212-279-4200.)

BUG
As written by Tracy Letts and directed by Dexter Bullard, this play is never exactly what it seems. It begins deceptively simply, in a residential hotel somewhere near Oklahoma City, in a town God may or may not have forsaken. Agnes White (the incomparable Shannon Cochran), who works as a bartender, stands at the door to her small, dingy room. Before long, a friend shows up with a little distraction—a guy named Peter Evans (Michael Shannon), who seems to want to hang out. Scenes of casual surrealism culminate, in the second half of the play, in acts of physical and emotional violence that do more than shock: they arouse both pity and despair. Bullard's actors can turn in an instant from realism to Grand Guignol. They wholly inhabit their characters' bodies, working second by second to the play's horrifying conclusion. Cochran and Shannon give not only two of the most nuanced performances you'll ever see but two of the greatest. (5/17/04) (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St., at Seventh Ave. 212-239-6200.)

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
Tony Kushner's bittersweet autobiographical saga about two stranded souls—eight-year-old Noah Gellman (Harrison Chad), who is suffering from the twin griefs of a recently deceased mother and a newly acquired stepmother, and his family's saturnine maid, Caroline Thibodeaux (Tonya Pinkins)—settles for no easy emotional solutions. Set in Louisiana in 1963, it takes the musical back to storytelling, to a moral universe, to a dissection of American society, and to folklore—that is, the lore of the folk, both black and white. With music by Jeanine Tesori. Directed by George C. Wolfe. (O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

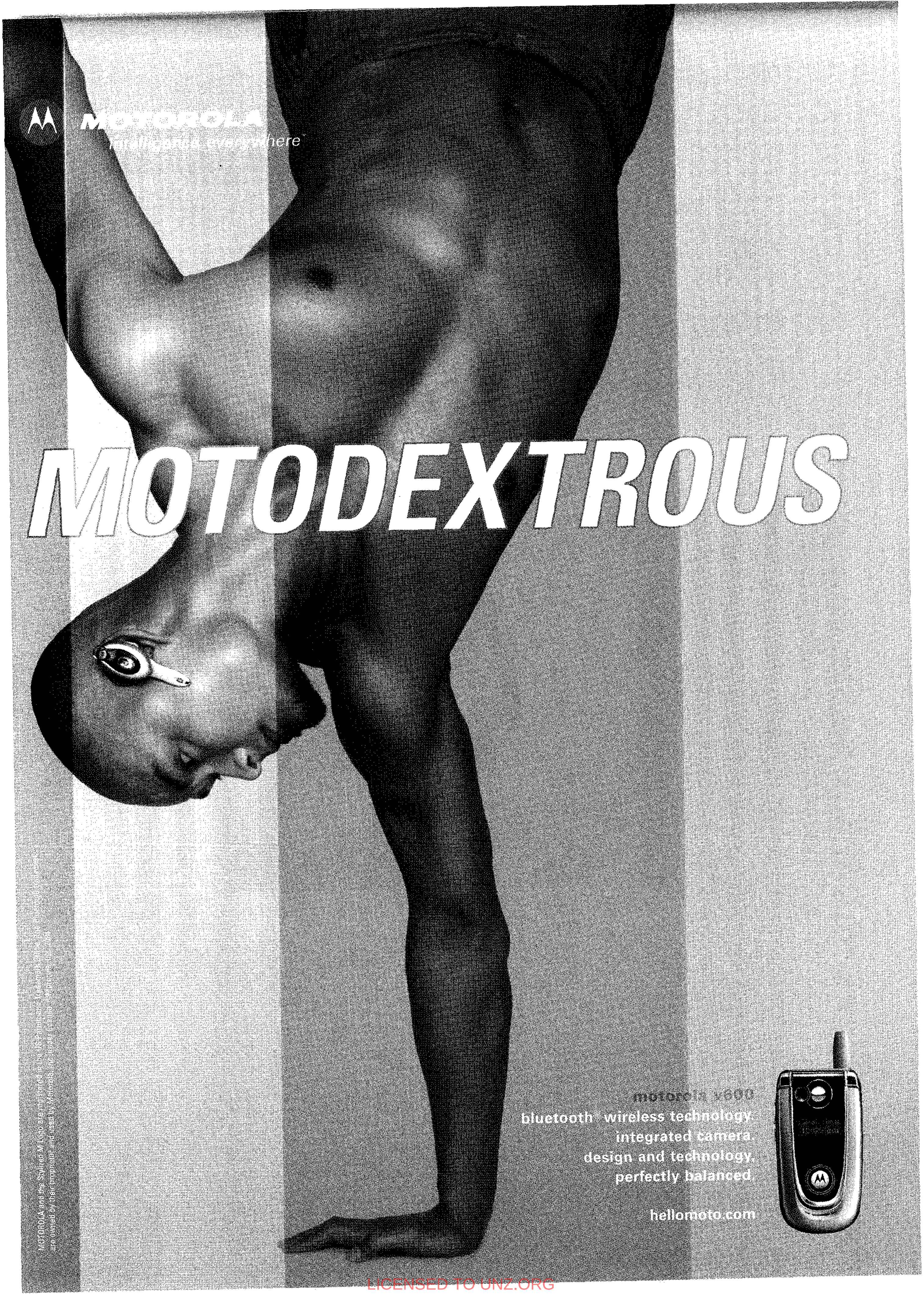
THE DISTANCE FROM HERE
Neil LaBute's gritty drama about an unloved, aimless suburban teen who can't control his anger was first produced at the Almeida Theatre in London two years ago. The central character, Darrell (Mark Webber, who also played the role in London), skids from wistful to violent in a millisecond; his emotions are on the surface, slick, and dangerous. As his weak-willed friend Tim—who turns out (under duress) to have both an instinct toward decency and the guts to comfort Darrell's girlfriend, Jenn (Alison Pill)—Logan Marshall-Green projects a scuzzy, believable warmth that gives pathos to the monstrous doings occurring around him. With Anna Paquin as Darrell's stepsister; Melissa Leo as his mother, Cammie; and Josh Charles as Cammie's boyfriend, Rich. Directed by Michael Greif. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

FINIAN'S RAINBOW
In this enchanting concert version of the quirky musical by Yip Harburg, Fred Saidy, and Burton Lane, an Irish immigrant (Jonathan Freeman), his daughter, Sharon (Kerry O'Malley), and a leprechaun (Malcolm Gets) arrive in the backward state of Missitucky to foil a racist politico. Gets emits superhuman energy; he leaps, he pounces, he pouts, and he even bumps a pianist off the bench and races through a number himself. The cast does a grand job with the songs, including "Old Devil Moon," "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?," and "Necessity," a stirring solo from the contralto Terri White. The proceedings are knit together by a charismatic narrator, David Staller. Adapted and directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Rep, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

FROZEN
Bryony Lavery's play about a grieving woman whose daughter was killed by a pedophile has moved to Broadway. Starring Swoosie Kurtz and Brían F. O'Byrne and directed by Doug Hughes. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

GUINEA PIG SOLO
In Brett C. Leonard's ambitious adaptation of Büchner's "Woyzeck," José Solo (the brilliant John Ortiz), a veteran of the current war in Iraq, finds himself trapped in post-September 11th New York. José longs for a cushion to shield him from the various blows that life has dealt him, and he is also struggling to win back his girlfriend, Vivian (Judy Reyes), and their catatonic son. But after Vivian's friend Nikki (the very funny Portia) points out that a handsome police officer (Jason Manuel Olazábal) has taken a shine to her, Vivian reaches, with some trepidation, for a new dream. As José, Ortiz has an intensity that is all his own—his emotional depth is perfectly balanced by a tender intellectualism, and it complements the charismatic physicality of Reyes's scenes with Olazábal once their courtship begins. Directed by Ian Belton. (5/17/04) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

HOMEBODY/KABUL
Tony Kushner has retooled his 2001 play about a British housewife's fascination with Afghanistan, which now appears at BAM in a new production starring Linda Emond, Reed Birney, and, in her New York stage début, Maggie Gyllenhaal. Directed by Frank Galati. (Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through May 30.)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INTIMATE APPAREL

Lynn Nottage's subtle and compelling play, a Roundabout Theatre Company production, reveals the fine emotional filigree of an ordinary black woman's life and the social forces that shape it. Starring Viola Davis and Russell Hornsby. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (4/19 & 26/04) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

IN TOKEN OF MY ADMIRATION

A play about the short-lived, intense friendship that arose between Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville in August of 1849, while Melville was writing "Moby-Dick" and after Hawthorne had published "The Scarlet Letter." With Joe Fuer as Hawthorne and Brian Barnhart as Melville. Directed by Randy Sharp. An Axis Theatre Company production. (1 Sheridan Sq. 212-807-9300.)

JUMPERS

In Tom Stoppard's 1972 farce about ratiocination (London's Royal National Theatre production, which is revived at the Brooks Atkinson under the direction of David Leveaux), the author attempts to affirm the existence of God through striptease, song, parody, paradox, a trained turtle, and a lost rabbit called Thumper. Intellectual audacity and chaotic idiocy combine in Stoppard's particular showy farce form. (5/3/04) (256 W. 47th St. 212-307-7171.)

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHARITY OF JOAN OF ARC

The inventive, Obie-winning company Target Margin presents the American première of a nineteenth-century play by Charles Péguy, translated from the French by Julian Green. Directed by David Herskovits. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

In a revival at the Royale, the purest music of Lorraine Hansberry's play sounds through the female characters. Phylicia Rashad, as Lena, the matriarch of the Younger family, gives a breakthrough performance; she knows how to make the smallest glance pay off. Sanaa Lathan, as Beneatha, Lena's outspoken, idealistic daughter, is Rashad's equal in panache. And the expert Audra McDonald, as Ruth, the wife of Lena's frustrated, callow son, Walter Lee, shades her depressed character in distinctive blue notes. As Walter Lee, Sean Combs is making his stage début. Handsome, muscular, and full of attitude, he is a brave man; in time, he may even be a good actor. In order to keep Combs from lowering the amperage of the crucial scenes, the director, Kenny Leon, cleverly contrives to mask him. This absence of texture mutes the resonance of Walter Lee's character, but not, luckily, of the play itself, whose well-crafted structure generates its own thrilling momentum. (5/10/04) (242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SUPERPOWERS

A new play written by Jeremy Dobrish, the artistic director of the Adobe Theatre Company, points out the pitfalls of having your fondest wishes come true. A magical dog (charmingly and convincingly played by Margie Stokley) gives three New Yorkers exactly what they want—youth, beauty, and the power of invisibility. Directed by Jessica Davis-Irons. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-352-3101.)

TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Roundabout Theatre Company's superbly cast revival of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's screwball comedy from 1934 stars Alec Baldwin as the worn-out impresario Oscar Jaffe and Anne Heche as his former lover and protégé, Lily Garland, who has become an Academy Award-winning star. Directed by Walter Bobbie. (4/5/04) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

The Mexican-American singer Lila Downs, at Satalla (see Night Life).

JENS UMBACH

THE TWO AND ONLY

The final production of the Atlantic Theatre's spring season, written and performed by the actor Jay Johnson (who appeared in "Soap" and "That '70s Show"), is about his lifelong passion for ventriloquism. Directed by Murphy Cross and Paul Kreppel, with a set by Beowulf Boritt. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

Performances of "La Bayadère" continue, followed by the première of A.B.T.'s new production of "Raymonda," by Anna-Marie Holmes and Kevin McKenzie, and by repertory programs. For a full cast list, see www.abt.org. ♦ May 17-18 and May 20 at 8 and May 19 at 2 and 8: "La Bayadère." ♦ May 21 at 8 and May 22 at 2 and 8: "Raymonda." ♦ May 24 at 8: "Theme and Variations," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Mozartiana," and "Ballet Imperial." ♦ May 25 at 8: "Petite Mort," "Sechs Tänze," "Pillar of Fire," and "Within You Without You: A Tribute to George Harrison." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

The season continues. ♦ May 19 at 8: "La Source," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Chaconne." ♦ May 20 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "La Source," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,' " and "The Four Temperaments." ♦ May 21 at 8: "La Source," "Shambards," and "La Sonnambula." ♦ May 22 at 2 (an all-Balanchine program): "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Square Dance," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,' " and "Chaconne." ♦ May 22 at 8 (an all-Balanchine program): "Divertimento No. 15," "Episodes," and "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze.' " ♦ May 23 at 3 (an all-Balanchine program): "Square Dance," "La Sonnambula," and "Chaconne." ♦ May 25 at 7:30 (an all-Balanchine program): "Who Cares?," "Western Symphony," and "Stars and Stripes." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570.)

"MARGOT FONTEYN IN AMERICA: A CELEBRATION"

The American début of the English ballerina Margot Fonteyn, on October 9, 1949, was more than a triumph; it was an apotheosis, marking the beginning of the American love affair with Fonteyn, who died in 1991. An exhibition at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, curated by Robert Gottlieb and Joy Williams Brown, captures Fonteyn's grace, glamour, and charm through photographs, film footage, original costumes, and couture designs by Yves Saint Laurent. In one photo, Jacqueline Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor race each other to reach the ballerina's dressing room. A film of Dame Margot dancing Aurora in "Sleeping Beauty"—the role that introduced her to American audiences—will be screened on May 20 at 5:30. The exhibition opens May 18. (Vincent Astor Gallery, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. For information, please call 212-870-1630.)

"NOIR"

Ten men and women dressed in costumes inspired by antiheroes and antiheroines from classic films perform a new dance by Noémie Lafrance, set in a garage on the Lower East Side. The audience views the performance from the seats of twenty-five parked cars, into which Brooks Williams's cinematic score is piped. (Delancey and Essex Municipal Parking Garage, 105 Essex St. 212-868-4444. May 19-22 at 7:30 and 9:30. Through May 29.)

LAR LUBOVITCH DANCE COMPANY

A new evening-length work, "Pentimento," marks the company's thirty-fifth anniversary. (Washington Square United Methodist Church, 135 W. 4th St. 212-868-4444. May 17-20 at 8 and May 21-22 at 8 and 10.)

PHILADANCO

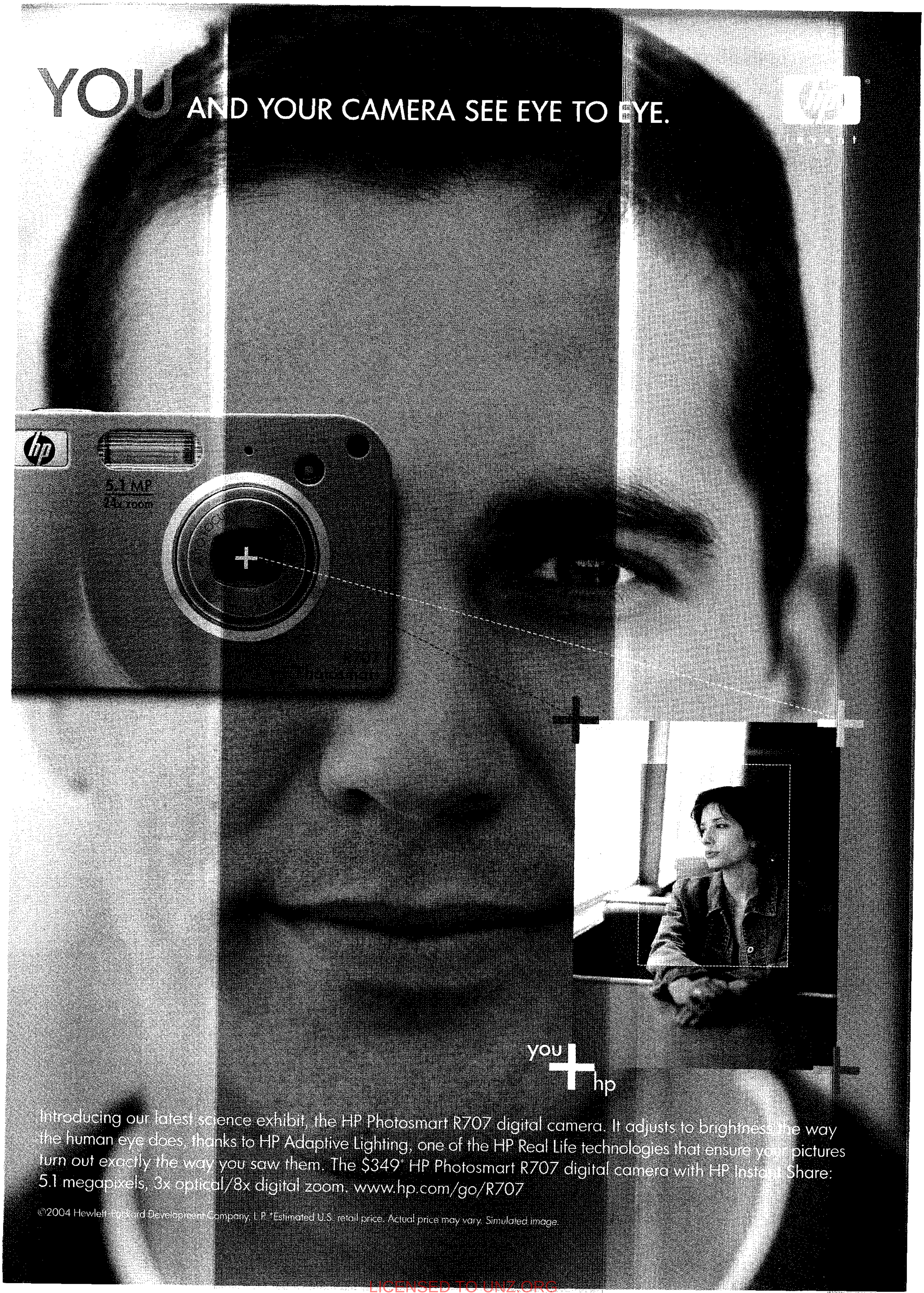
The Philadelphia Dance Company's season at the Joyce, entitled "We Too Dance: African American Men in Dance," continues. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 18-21 at 8, May 22 at 2 and 8, and May 23 at 2 and 7:30.)

BATTLEWORKS DANCE COMPANY

The New York début of Robert Battle's two-year-old company. Works include the world première of "Spoken," about the nature of fanaticism; the New York première of "Alleluia," about purification rituals; and the repertory pieces "Mood Indigo," "Takademe," "The Hunt," and the comic duet "Two." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 18-22 at 7.)

BALLETMET COLUMBUS

In its Joyce début, the Ohio-based troupe presents dances in three moods. Stanton Welch's "Play" has an urban setting and is performed by dancers in street clothes who assume blank expressions as they move to the music of Moby, miming such mundane acts as talking on a cell phone. James Kudelka's "Gazebo Dances" is set to an original score by John Corigliano inspired by marching-band music. Deanna Carter's "Colores de Alma" is an intricately partnered toe-shoe flamenco. (Joyce, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 25 at 8; through May 30.)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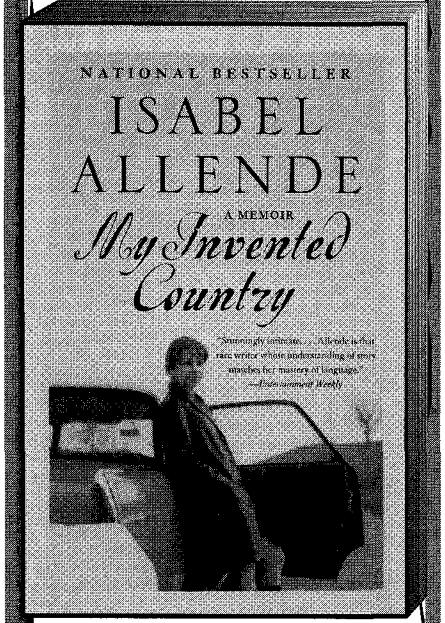
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"CUMULUS & OTHER WORKS"
A work in progress by Nina Winthrop & Dancers is set to an original score for wind instruments by Jon Gibson, who performs live. The group also presents the repertory works "Prism," on the seven deadly sins, and "Three Lives and Something," a quartet. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-696-7483. May 19-22 at 7 and May 23 at 3.)

"ANTIGONE: AS PLAYED & DANCED BY THREE FATES ON THE WAY TO BECOMING THREE GRACES"
A revival of Big Dance Theatre's production of the Sophocles play, adapted by Mac Wellman, with choreography and musical staging by Annie-B Parson. Rebecca Wisocky is Creon, and Deirdre O'Connell is Antigone. Directed by Paul Lazar. (Classic Stage, 136 E. 13th St. 212-677-4210. May 18-22 at 8 and May 23 at 3.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
The buzz surrounding the Strokes has subsided (thanks in part to the arrival of a fresh crop of scruffy indie rockers), but they remain a big draw. The louche locals kick off the SummerStage season with a sold-out benefit show. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. May 19 at 6.)

MAGNETIC FIELDS
Stephin Merritt and his band return (see This Week). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. May 20-21 at 8.)

"LIVE FROM HOME"
The winning acoustic-music series at the Housing Works Used Book Café continues with **Kate Jacobs, Leona Naess,** and **Andy Stochansky.** (126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324. May 21 at 7:30.)

THE WHO
Pete Townshend, Roger Daltrey, and a supporting cast hit the road after recording their first new material since "It's Hard," in 1982. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. May 22 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
May 22 at 8:30: A tribute to the sitar master **Ustad Vilayat Khan,** who died on March 13, 2004, features Khan's sons, Shujaat Khan and Hidayat Khan. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. For more information, call 212-545-7536. May 22 at 8:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 19: The jazz-rock collective **Blood, Sweat & Tears,** best known for such radio staples as "Spinning Wheel" and "You've Made Me So Very Happy." The founder and keyboardist, Al Kooper, may be long gone from the group, but David Clayton-Thomas, the voice behind the band's biggest hits, keeps the sound alive. May 20: The retro instrumental funk of the **Bo-Keys,** from Memphis. May 21: The keyboardist **Keith Emerson** was a primary architect of progressive rock in the late sixties and early seventies. His accomplished playing for the Nice and Emerson, Lake & Palmer raised the bar for rock musicians, and, though he's kept a low profile in recent years, he appears occasionally to play filigree-filled hymns for the prog faithful.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 20: **Stand,** a determined rock ensemble of Irish expatriates who traded Dublin for New York City, bring their energetic live show and earnest, gritty aesthetic to a big room after slugging it out in tiny local clubs. May 21: The sweaty punk revivalism of the **Fever.** May 22: The **Scissor Sisters** are a flamboyant local outfit who fuse vintage glam rock with synth-fuelled Euro-disco.

TABLES FOR TWO

JACK'S LUXURY OYSTER BAR
246 E. 5th St. (212-673-0338)—Good manners are everything in close quarters. The doll-house scale of this restaurant requires a profusion of "excuse me"s, many of them delivered gently by a busboy in a starchy cruise-ship coat carrying trays of "deconstructed" oysters Rockefeller and Mississippi paddlefish roe. In a spotless exposed kitchen on the second floor—it's no bigger than one you'd find in a studio apartment, and inches from the upstairs dining room—Allison Vines-Rushing and Slade Rushing, the newlywed chefs, must be particularly diplomatic. "We trade off cooking and cleaning," Vines-Rushing, who is from Louisiana, said. She was sautéing spinach in a pan. "It's only fair." The tact achieves consummation in Denis Le Denn, the maître d' and captain, who runs the downstairs dining room. Tall and broad and formerly of Alain Ducasse, he is "one of the great peacock maître d's," according to the owner, Jack Lamb. (Lamb said he was anxious about asking Le Denn to work for him: "He's so grand—and he's so big!")

The layout doesn't constrain patrons from getting boisterous, particularly when they follow Le Denn's recommendation of an apéritif of pink champagne. Every meal starts off with a scallop shell's worth of pecans, burnt and sugary, with an afterbite of cayenne. Oysters—Hama Hama, Gold Creek, Salutation Cove—wink from a bed of ice on the bar, near a fish tank shaped like a Victorian bell jar. Someone always orders the New Orleans barbecued lobster, which is tender and buttery and served with a nip of thyme and a garlic clove, and then has to fend off poachers. The ceremoniously assembled three-tiered fruits de mer, for a hundred dollars, is easier to share: sweet Taylor Bay scallops, shrimp, caviar, lobster salad, oysters, and clams. The mignonette, relentlessly tart and full of minced onions, goes with almost all of it.

For dessert, Lamb serves only baba au rhum but insists on calling it bananas Foster. (There are no bananas.) Le Denn has a heavy pouring hand, and the baba acts like a sponge on the rum. By the end of the night, cheeks are florid—the restaurant, with red banquettes and red checkered walls, is an altogether rosy place—voices loud, largesse abounding. The folks outside waiting for a table literally have their noses pressed up to the glass. (Open for dinner Monday through Saturday. Entrées $24-$36.)

—*Dana Goodyear*

THE HOOK
18 Commerce St., Red Hook, Brooklyn (718-797-3007)—May 20: The Brooklyn ensemble **Les Sans Culottes** play raunchy faux-French rock that's both a sendup of and a tribute to late-period Serge Gainsbourg and punchy *yé-yé* girl pop. Their latest offering is titled "Fixation Orale."

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 19: The **Joey Ramone Birthday Bash** brings together the Alkaline Trio, the Dickies, the Supersuckers, and others. May 20-21: The British electronic duo **Zero 7,** following in the ethereal footsteps of such trip-hop acts as Portishead, Morcheeba, and Air, crafted an instant coffeehouse classic in 2001 with its first album, "Simple Things." The group's new release, "When It Falls," has more of the same downbeat sensuousness and sultry soul. May 25: The **Thrills,** from Ireland, make sunny harmony-laden rock.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 19: The evocative Brazilian guitarist **Vinicius Cantuária.** May 24-25: **Steve Forbert,** the folk-rock troubadour from Meridian, Mississippi, stops by with songs from his latest album, "Just Like There's

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Nothin' to It." With **Stacey Earle,** the hard-touring younger sister of the alt-country rocker Steve.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—May 19: The careful harmonies and emotionally incisive lyrics of the Brooklyn-based group **Ida.** May 23: **Acid Mothers Temple,** a Japanese collective known for expansive psychedelic compositions that can quickly become bad trips, turn more melodic in their latest release, "Mantra of Love."

PIANOS
158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—May 22: The first-annual **Asian Rock Festival** is an eight-hour affair with performances by such bands as Serious Weapon, Bastion, Johnny Hi-Fi, the Infirm Glory of the Positive Hour, Strangeway, Kite Operations, Carol Bui, and Eyes Like Knives.

ROTHKO
116 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. (212-475-7088)—The latest entry in the Lower East Side rock scene takes its name not from the painter (although its interior is, fittingly, a bright red) but rather from its neighborhood's past—a sign for a defunct machine shop called S. Rothkopf & Sons hangs over the front door. The simply outfitted two-level space, which opened about a month ago, is just the right size for up-and-coming bands. The owner, a former stock analyst who used to cover the entertainment giant Clear Channel, says that he'll be presenting bands such as Enon, A.R.E. Weapons, TV on the Radio, Ambulance LTD, and Secret Machines.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—May 19: **Lila Downs,** whose mother was a Mixtec singer from Mexico and whose father was an academic from the United States, has studied opera and anthropology, and her music addresses feminism, civil rights, and the plight of Mexican immigrants. Her forthcoming album of jazz-and-Afro-Cuban-influenced songs is entitled "One Blood: Una Sangre." May 21-22: The Irish-born singer **Maura O'Connell** roams through material from her homeland and from the contemporary pop and jazz worlds.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through June 12: When **Curtis Stigers,** a pleasant enough vocal stylist who also plays agreeable sax, went from singing pop to singing jazz a few years back, it all seemed a bit cockeyed. But, now that a mass of classic-rock mainstays have turned to standards, it appears that he was ahead of the curve.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—May 19-22: The fifty-nine-year-old guitarist **Pat Martino,** who never achieved a high profile, could hold his own with the best players of his generation.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through May 23: The bassist **Ron Carter** reconvenes the trio that made his album "The Golden Striker" one of the marvels of the 2003 jazz season. It features the guitarist **Russell Malone** and the pianist **Mulgrew Miller.**

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through June 26, **Bobby Short.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—May 18-June 5: **Keely Smith,** who secured a place in the neo-hipster's pantheon as the vocal sidekick to her former husband Louis Prima, is both legendary and underrated. She can still sing the stuffing out of a ballad as well as swing any tune into the stratosphere.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—May 18-19: **Tisziji Muñoz,** a guitarist with a mystical bent, a reputation for sonic explorations, and a cult following among six-string aficionados. His New York band includes the saxophonist **Ravi Coltrane** and the "Late Show" band leader, **Paul Shaffer.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

Bands and d.j.s mix it up at Rothko, a new club on the Lower East Side.

MARINA SAGONA

LE JAZZ AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—May 20-23: When the refined and elegant **Wesla Whitfield** applies herself to a standard, you can be certain that each and every consonant will be heard.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 18-20: The pianist and composer **Randy Weston's** African Rhythms Quartet combines the rhythmic diversity of the African diaspora with the lyrical smarts of New York bebop. Weston brings percussive energy to pointillistic poetry, and the results can be bracing—this is world music that never devalues its sources. May 21-23: Weston expands his African Rhythms band to a sextet, with the addition of **T. K. Blue** on alto saxophone and **Benny Powell** on trombone.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—May 20-21: Taking a hint from Cassandra Wilson, the singer **Carla Cook** performs songs by a wide range of composers, from Duke Ellington and Herbie Hancock to Neil Young and Bobbie Gentry.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through May 23: The saxophonist **Chris Potter's** recent association with Dave Holland has brought him renown; he has been a talent to watch for more than a decade. His own band includes the guitarist **Adam Rogers,** the drummer **Bill Stewart,** and the bassist **Scott Coley.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—A couple of curators in the Costume Institute have had the marvellous idea of installing brocaded silk dresses and coats embroidered with silver thread on mannequins arranged *en conversant* in the period rooms of the Wrightsman Galleries. **"Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century"** unfolds like a racy novel, with each mirrored and panelled chamber inhabited by richly apparelled ladies and gentlemen enjoying music lessons and playing cards, knocking over vases and swooning onto sofas in pantomimed ardor. Through Aug. 8. ♦ After having lived here since 1964 and having proposed, at various times, to "wrap" MOMA, the Whitney, and several office buildings around town, Christo and his wife-collaborator, Jeanne-Claude, finally have the go-ahead on a project in Manhattan. For sixteen days in February, 2005, the couple will install seventy-five hundred orange fabric gates at twelve-foot intervals along twenty-three miles of pedestrian pathways in Central Park. **"Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Gates, Central Park, New York"** documents the genesis of the project—begun in 1979—including photographs, working drawings and collages, maps, and samples of the hardware for the sixteen-foot-tall gates. Through July 25. ♦ A jewel of a show, **"Klee: The Late Years"** vivifies a great artist whose prestige has suffered from generations of imitators who probably no longer know who they're imitating. Twenty-four top-drawer little paintings, watercolors, and drawings from 1925 to 1940—when Paul Klee worked with the Bauhaus in Dessau, taught in Düsseldorf, and then took refuge from the Nazis in his native Bern—explore the range of his talent, from glyphic cartooning to transfer printing, sprayed watercolor, slathered plaster, and other wizardries that once made him the Merlin of modern art. Through June 27. ♦ **"Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)."** Through July 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Roth Time,"** a gargantuan retrospective of the late, under-known German-Swiss artist Dieter Roth, is on view at MOMA and in a smaller show at its affiliate, P.S. 1. Roth emerged after the Second World War as a gifted draftsman à la Paul Klee, proceeded through phases of inventive geometric and kinetic work, and then, influenced by Jean Tinguely and Fluxus, became an installational wild man, using innumerable mediums (frequently, cast chocolate) to colonize the world with a kind of participatory narcissism. Did Roth liberate his considerable talent, or trash it? Through June 7. ♦ **"Humble Masterpieces,"** a collection of a hundred and twenty-two well-designed objects either drawn from the museum's collection (such as a Post-it note) or under consideration for acquisition (such as M&M's). Through Sept. 27. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated)"** closes May 19. ♦ Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—A startlingly good Biennial banishes the gloom that has long beset the Whitney's programs on contemporary art. Painting and drawing reign. Handmade pictures exercise a gravitational tug on practically everything in the show, including sculptures, installations, videos, photographs, films, and digital animation. Paintings by younger artists like Elizabeth Peyton, Laura Owens, and Lecia Dole-Recio exchange energy with those

by veterans like David Hockney, Mel Bochner, and Robert Mangold. Video installation emerges as a fully mature art form in strong works by Catherine Sullivan, Craigie Horsfield, Eve Sussman, and Slater Bradley. Installational hybrids of painting and sculpture—dominant in the past decade—show signs of exhaustion; an exception is a delightful neo-psychedelic disco by a group called assume vivid astro focus. Through May 30. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—A de-facto borough biennial, the sprawling survey **"Open House: Working in Brooklyn"** has three hundred works by two hundred artists in every conceivable medium. Éminences grises (Vito Acconci, Martha Rosler) are surrounded by mainstays of the Williamsburg art community (Fred Tomaselli, Roxy Paine) and up-and-comers born in the nineteen-seventies (Amy Cutler, Kirsten Hassenfeld). Inevitably, the show is a bit of a hodgepodge, with a surprising emphasis on easel painting. But the eclecticism generates ample electricity—the show is likely to become a landmark. Through Aug. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Modigliani: Beyond the Myth."** See This Week. Opens May 21. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Fred Wilson: Objects and Installations, 1985-2000,"** the first retrospective of work by the artist famous for his mock museum installations. Through July 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

SARAH AUSTIN
In the late sixties and seventies, during the feminist heyday, Austin churned out objects lauding dead male artists. She made boxes that borrowed heavily from Joseph Cornell and paid homage to Duchamp and Picasso. "16 Modern Sculptors" uses black-and-white cutout images to salute artists and their oeuvres, including Brancusi, Rodin, and Calder; "Surrealism" is an epic ode to that movement. Women aren't entirely absent—Austin nods to Mary McCarthy and Gertrude Stein in smaller works—and politics makes a brief appearance in "Student Riot in Paris" (1969), a box containing a photograph of protesters crowding a city street. Through May 29. (Venardos, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-879-5858.)

LUCIAN FREUD
England's most famous living artist is represented by a group of recent, mostly minor paintings and etchings: several nudes, some heads, a recurring dog and horse, a plate of eggs recalling Chardin, and Constable-inspired views of his back-yard garden. The magnum opus is "The Brigadier," a full-length seated portrait of Andrew Parker Bowles, his medal-festooned coat unbuttoned to expose a middle-aged paunch. An hour-long video by Jake Auerbach and photographs by Freud's assistant, David Dawson, pull back the curtain on the eminent painter's process, revealing in intimate detail the Master's surprisingly drab studio and tireless work habits. Through May 27. (Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 212-734-6300.)

RED GROOMS
The "sculpto-pictoramas" that brought Grooms fame suffer from their lightheartedness: less talented artists have got attention by virtue of their moroseness. A new series, all watercolors except for one grand oil painting of Grooms with his friends and family, finds the artist at ease, vacationing in Paris and Patmos, and painting wildflowers on the deck of his summer home outside Nashville. His throwaway caricatures are still sharp and his colors still sunny, but the dearth of W.P.A.-style subject matter is a plus. Grooms is more profound when he adopts the cozy upper-class dappling of Bonnard. Through May 28. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-262-5050.)

FRANK STELLA
Three huge sculptural paintings from the seventies. Metal panels tilt out of the picture frames, and protractor shapes hover in beaklike arrangements that, apparently, give the pieces their titles: "New Caledonian Lorikeet," "Noguchi's Okinawa Woodpecker," and "Wake Island Rail" (which refers to an extinct species of bird native to a Pacific atoll that saw heavy action in the Second World War). The works are witty but not weighty. Through June 5. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313.)

Short List

JEFF KOONS
C&M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020.
Through June 5.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

CLAES OLDENBURG AND COOSJE VAN BRUGGEN
Two giant slices of blueberry pie flank the entrance to this otherwise intimate show, which focusses on some fifty drawings of food, executed in watercolor, colored pen and pencil, and pastel on tiny pieces of notebook paper. A curiously anthropomorphic lemon, a dancing lobster, ice cream performing diverse acrobatics: the drawings are silly and swift, bits of breezy dia-

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logue between the longtime spouse-collaborators. Through July 2. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

Short List

AMY CUTLER
Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450.
Through June 12.
WILLEM DE KOONING
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St.
212-741-1111. Through June 19.
LORNA SIMPSON
Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St.
212-239-1181. Through June 5.
WAYNE WHITE
Clementine, 526 W. 26th St.
212-243-5937. Through May 22.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

LEE BUL
Some kind of body—human, cyborg, or extraterrestrial—has been blown apart, and white painted pieces are suspended from wires throughout the gallery, along with vaguely insectlike wire-and-crystal sculptures. Urethane panels are embedded with mother-of-pearl to make abstract monsters. Viewed up close, the antennae and scales reveal a Hollywood F/X precision, but the over-all effect is bloodless and chilly. Through June 5. (Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster St. 212-343-7300.)

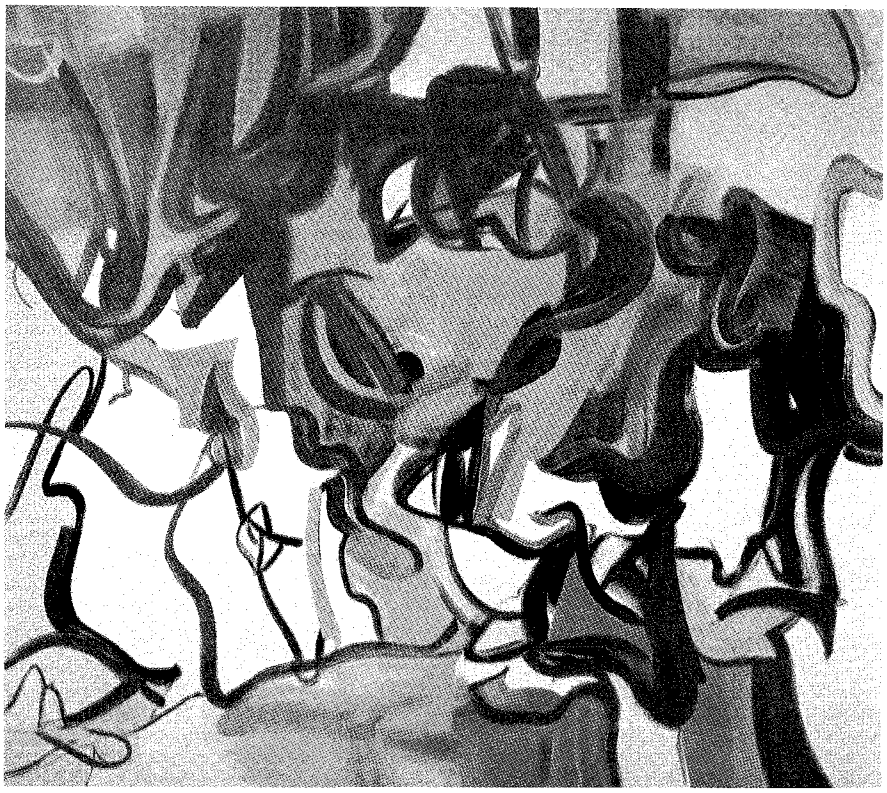
ELLEN DEPOORTER
Depoorter describes her subjects as nudes, but most of them are only halfway there, with a bra slipping off or a shirt lifted to flash the viewer. "The Adoration of the Virgins," ostensibly inspired by Botticelli's "Primavera," depicts a dozen larger-than-life (in several senses) porn stars in a six-panel painting. The narrow gallery has a mirror hung on the facing wall, which provides the best view of the work. Through May 27. (Transplant, 139 Orchard St. 212-505-0994.)

RICO GATSON
In "History Lessons," footage from "The Birth of a Nation" is layered with the disembodied heads of George Wallace, Medgar Evers, and Byron De La Beckwith. Bob Dylan's "Only a Pawn in Their Game" plays in the background. The hypnotic (if didactic) installation is presented on an imposing four-sided bank of video monitors with corresponding projections on each wall. Through May 29. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 212-226-3232.)

"ROCK'S ROLE (AFTER RYOANJI)"
The famous Zen temple in a rock garden in Kyoto served as the setting for a series of John Cage recordings (1983-92), which in turn inspired this group show. Cellulose peanuts imitate the raked white pebble surface of the garden, and audio speakers substitute for rocks; sound provided by seventeen artists and mixed by Ron Kuivila fills the room. Visitors can sit on slatted wood benches and contemplate the sounds of colliding billiard balls or a flute played by the wind. Or you can focus in true Cagean fashion on the silence between the sounds and the accidental noise occurring around you. Through June 26. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. 212-219-0473.)

Short List

VINCENT LAMOUROUX
Brownstone, 39 Wooster St.
212-334-3455. Through May 29.



DUTCH TREAT *Willem de Kooning, who died in 1997, would have turned a hundred last month. A show of thirty-nine paintings at Gagosian spans his career from 1946 to 1988, starting with the fiercely abstracted Surrealism that won him fame and ending with the strange, slow, luminous work that he made while in the tightening grip of Alzheimer's. Plangent in the nineteen-fifties, sensual in the sixties, and stormy in the seventies, de Kooning's style developed with an occult emotional logic that spurred continual invention. His mastery of drawing, color, and touch was rivalled in the last century only by the talents of Picasso, Matisse, and—a hauntingly revived influence in the late work—de Kooning's mentor Arshile Gorky.—Peter Schjeldahl*

PHOTOGRAPHY

RENÉ BURRI
Burri is one of the most famous living Magnum photographers, with a body of work that includes classic portraits of Picasso, Che Guevara, and Giacometti and fifty years' worth of reportage from all over the world. This show, in the elegant gallery on top of the Hermès store on Madison Avenue, concentrates on his interest in architecture and architects, most notably Le Corbusier, Oscar Niemeyer, and Luis Barragán. There are well over a hundred pictures: of the chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, of a construction worker showing his family Brasília, of Nixon and Sadat with their wives at Giza, and even one of some aeration towers at a missile site in New Mexico that looks like it was taken by the Bechers. Through June 5. (Hermès, 691 Madison Ave. 212-835-6444.)

ANDREAS GURSKY
Gursky's first show in New York since a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art three years ago is made up of ten huge color prints, including carefully detailed shots of the endless rows of beach umbrellas at Rimini, cattle stockades in Colorado and Japan, a basket-weaving factory in Vietnam, and a garbage dump in Mexico City. Usually taken from a great distance with an immense depth of field, these photographs encompass more than the human eye can take in at once, and, like a Rothko or a Frederick Church painting, they can be disorienting. Through June 27. (Matthew Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

VIK MUNIZ
In 2002, Muniz wrapped the Brooklyn Academy of Music in murals made from photographs of gingerbread replicas of the building's Renaissance Revival façade. He has also blown up photographs of drawings after Rembrandt in chocolate, pornographic images found on the Internet and rerendered in Silly Putty, and pictures of children of cane cutters drawn in sugar. For this show, he punched what must have been thousands of circles from magazine pages and turned them into collages that re-create paintings by Gauguin, Chardin, Morandi, Cotan, Fantin-Latour, and Cézanne. Then he enlarged the collages into six-by-nine-foot color prints; the pieces of magazine confetti are now the size of silver dollars. Through June 5. (Brent Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

CINDY SHERMAN
The artist as circus. Sherman's large new photographs of herself in crude clown costume and makeup, against digitally created backgrounds in trumpeting colors, stun at first glance. Then the work's transparent artifice—the costumes are thrown together, mere schmattes—and the richness of the artist's characteracting become clearer. Moping, simpering, and strutting, the fiercely individualized clowns gaze outward, but not at us. In worlds of their own, they are tatterdemalion gods and goddesses of full-throttle performance. If you think that these pictures aren't about you, you aren't thinking. Through June 26. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO
A rare chance to see Sugimoto's pictures of dioramas, most of which were taken at the Museum of Natural History in New York. Gorillas, polar bears, and dinosaurs act out, while fur-clad Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals appear oddly pensive. Sugimoto is a master of black-and-white printing, which makes the inclusion of a color version of one of his most famous pictures, an homage to Vermeer's "The Music Lesson," even more startling. It shows a wax tableau in the Amsterdam Madame Tussaud's. Sugimoto's tripod rather than Vermeer's easel is reflected in the mirror. Through June 26. (Yoshii, 17 E. 76th St. 212-744-5550.)

JEFF WALL
Large, backlit transparencies, somewhat like bus-shelter ads. Wall creates and directs (or, at any rate, "collaborates" in) the scenes he photographs. In one picture, an archeologist excavates an Indian site in a lush forest; in another, a woman carries a serving tray along the asphalt walk behind a house. The subjects of these mysteriously banal tableaux are studiously oblivious of the camera. Smaller photo-

graphs in one of the gallery's back rooms focus on stains, including a greasy discoloration on the flimsy ceiling panels of a former bakery and patches of blood on a cloth in a parking lot. Through May 29. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

"OFF BROADWAY"
In a rented space across from the Gourmet Garage in SoHo, four intrepid young Magnum photographers—Thomas Dworzak, Alex Majoli, Paolo Pellegrin, and Ilkka Uimonen—have designed a show of their work from various wars and catastrophic social upheavals, including those in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Ethiopia, and Kosovo. Upstairs, the pictures are presented fairly straightforwardly. Downstairs, in a dark, brick-walled room, a soundtrack composed by Fabio Barovero, a founder of the band Mau Mau, accompanies a slide show of photographs projected onto a temporary cloth wall. Other black cloth walls form cubicles for mini slide shows, including one of Dworzak's pictures of sexually suggestive Taliban portraits, taken in Kandahar, some of which appeared in these pages during the recent war in Afghanistan. The Taliban portraits are in bright colors, but most of the work in the show is black-and-white, with no attribution or titles. The effect is dramatic and searing. Through May 30. (60 Mercer St. 212-929-6000.)

Short List

ROGER MAYNE
Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868. Through June 5.

MARTIN PARR
Janet Borden, 560 Broadway. 212-431-0166. Through May 28.

DAVID STEPHENSON
Julie Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410. Through May 22.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
May 19 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: The serene equanimity of John F. Kensett's Luminist masterwork "On the Coast, Beverly Shore, Massachusetts," one of the highlights of this sale of American paintings, drawings, and sculptures, epitomizes the enchantment of American artists with the tranquillity of their native landscape. The auction also features works from the estate of Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney, among them three exceptional pictures by John Singer Sargent: a provocative portrait of a reclining Madame Roger-Jourdain, Sargent's muse and confidante during his time in Paris; a dynamic oil of a striding Robert Louis Stevenson, whom Sargent adored, and his wife; and the elegant "Venetian Loggia." ♦ May 20 at 10:15 A.M.: The centerpiece of a sale of English and Continental silver boasts a history as intricate as its craftsmanship. Commissioned in 1754 by a German duke from Paris's foremost silversmith, François-Thomas Germain, "La Machine d'Argent" is an astounding silver sculpture of naturalistically rendered animals and vegetables. ♦ May 21 at 10:15 A.M.: Mr. and Mrs. Eric Greenberg's collection of French furniture features an impressive selection of works by the Parisian cabinetmaker André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732), including a rare brass-and-brown-tortoiseshell-inlaid marquetry clock on a pedestal; a pair of early-eighteenth-century four-light candelabra; and an ormolu-mounted *table en bureau* first owned by the Comte de Vaudreuil (expected to sell for approximately two million dollars). ♦ May 21 at 11 A.M. and 2: An exquisite German neoclassical writing table mounted with ormolu and veneered with a scene of Aeneas fleeing Troy, his blind father Anchises flung over his shoulder, is a highlight of an auction of French and Continental furniture. ♦ May 22 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of wine. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
May 19 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of European furniture, art works, tapestries, carpets, and ceramics. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE
May 19 at 10 A.M.: English and Continental furniture and decorations, along with a selection of Old Master paintings and drawings. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN
May 20 at 10:30 A.M. and 2: A sale of photographs and photographic literature distinguished by a series of prints of Yosemite by the landscape photographer Carleton Watkins, which persuaded President Lincoln to preserve the area as a national park, and a turn-of-the-century group portrait of Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, and the Wild Bunch after a big score, supposedly used by the authorities to track down the outlaws. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

NEW YORK CITY OPERA: "VOX—AND FRIENDS"
City Opera's commitment to American music is reinforced every spring with "Vox: Showcasing American Composers," a postseason series that focusses on readings of new works by musicians and writers in a wide range of styles. This year's events, all at Symphony Space, seem more like a festival than ever, since the company has invited a number of New York's most innovative presenters of alternative music theatre (including the Center for Contemporary Opera) to join in. May 25 at 6:45: Mark Adamo hosts the opening event, an amuse-bouche that includes excerpts from Ricky Ian Gordon's "Only Heaven" (based on the poetry of Langston Hughes) and the composer-librettist Nick Brooke's "Tone Test," a work for two performers and a phonograph (inspired by Thomas Edison's public demonstrations of his invention), which will be premièred at the Lincoln Center Festival this summer. ♦ May 25 at 8: "Composers and the Voice," a mini-concert (presented by American Opera Projects) of new songs by Randall Eng, Peter Flint, Vivian Fung, and others. ♦ May 25 at 9: Encompass New Opera Theatre offers highlights from two newly commissioned operas: "Tesla," a portrait of the eccentric inventor and scientist by Carson Kievman (with a libretto by Thomas Babe), and Lior Navok's "The Theory of Everything," another scientific fantasy (with a libretto by Nancy Rhodes). (Broadway at 95th St. No tickets required.)

AMATO OPERA
Anthony Amato's feisty chamber-opera company, a fixture of the East Village, presents its final production of the season, **"Lucia di Lammermoor."** (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. May 21-22 at 7:30 and May 23 at 2:30. Through June 6.)

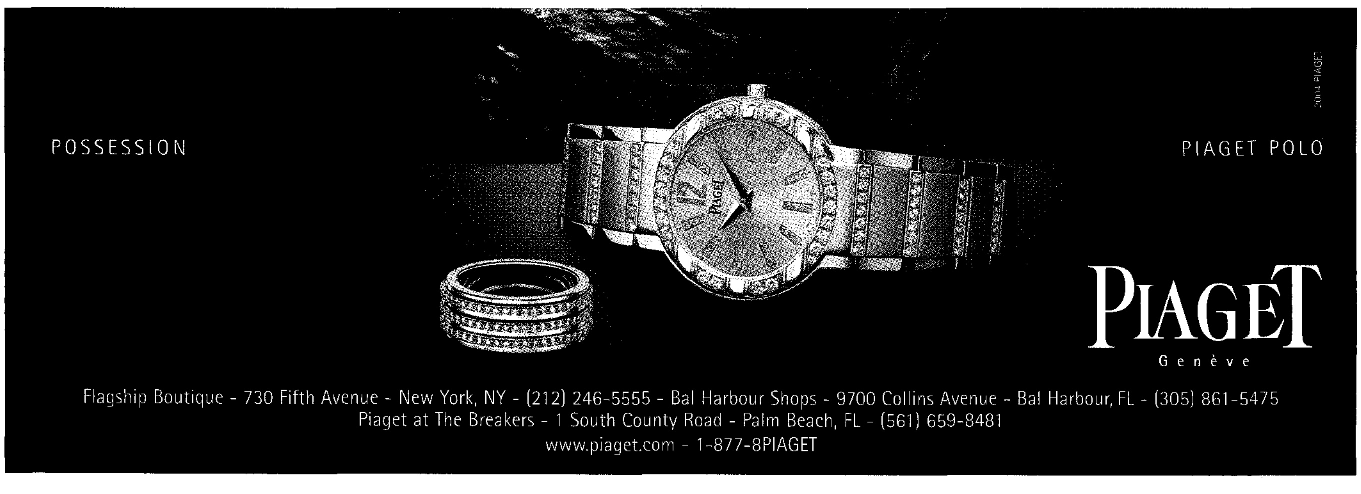
"MUSIC IN CHELSEA": PRISM OPERA SHOWCASE
Scott Bearden, Colleen McGrath, James Archie Worley, Cherry Duke, and Mark Risinger take the featured roles in a concert performance (with piano accompaniment) of **"Rigoletto."** (St. Peter's Church, 346 W. 20th St. May 23 at 4. A donation is suggested.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: CHARLES IVES FESTIVAL
The Philharmonic—which helped launch the Ives craze when Leonard Bernstein premièred the Second Symphony in 1951—commemorates America's first great composer on the fiftieth anniversary of his death with a concert series that puts the rebellious genius together with composers he admired (or who admire him). In the next concert, the versatile soprano and actress Audra McDonald—taking a quick break from her starring role in "A Raisin in the Sun"—joins the composer-conductor John Adams for "Songs of Ragtime and Reminiscence," a bouquet of songs by Ives ("Down East" and "At the River," orchestrated by Adams), Gershwin, and Berlin. The concert begins with a collection of short Ives instrumental works (including the Philharmonic premières of the "Country Band" March and "Scherzo: Over the Pavements") and concludes with a hefty dose of Adams—the world première of "Easter Eve 1945" and a performance of one of his seminal postminimalist masterpieces, "Harmonium" (with the Choral Arts Society of Washington). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. May 21-22 at 8 and May 25 at 7:30. For more information, see Recitals.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA: WHITAKER NEW MUSIC READINGS
Eight promising young Americans enjoy readings of their orchestral works at Miller Theatre, conducted by Carl St. Clair and Jeffrey Milarsky. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. May 20-21 at 10 A.M. Admission is free; for reservations, which are suggested, call 212-977-8495, ext. 260.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine concludes the orchestra's Carnegie Hall series with two monster concerts. May 21 at 8: Three caprices—Strauss's Oboe Concerto, Ravel's "Don



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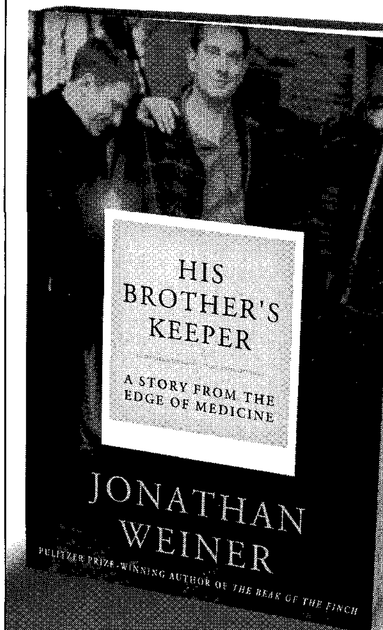
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Quichotte à Dulcinée," and Mahler's "Songs of a Wayfarer"—prepare the way for Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. The bass-baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky is the special guest. ♦ May 23 at 3: Mahler's Ninth Symphony demands such overwhelming musical (and spiritual) resources from conductors and orchestras that it usually fills up a program all by itself. Not so for Levine, who will precede it with a performance of Berg's Violin Concerto, with the solo honors going to the splendid German violinist Christian Tetzlaff. (212-247-7800.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC: "MR. TAMBOURINE MAN"
The New York première of the orchestral version of John Corigliano's song cycle on Bob Dylan texts is the capstone of a program that also includes works by Beethoven and Strauss (the Suite from "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme"). JoAnn Falletta conducts. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 22 at 8. See This Week.)

CERDDORION: "IF THIS BE DEATH . . ."
The chamber choir, twenty-eight strong, offers an eclectic program of serious works by Victoria (the "Officium Defunctorum"), Barber, Druckman, Pinkham, and Pizzetti (the Requiem, from 1923, a true rarity). (Church of St. Luke in the Fields, 487 Hudson St. May 22 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE: "CROWN IMPERIAL: MUSIC AND THE MOVIES"
Robert Bass—New York's most ambitious choral director—leads his group (and the Orchestra of St. Luke's) in music from Prokofiev's score to "Ivan the Terrible" and from John Barry's score to "The Lion in Winter" (introduced by Timothy Dalton, who shared the screen with Hepburn, Hopkins, and O'Toole). Excerpts from the films will be shown in synch with the music. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 25 at 8.)

RECITALS

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "A MULTITUDE OF SINS"
The pianist, coach, and raconteur Steven Blier closes the festival's season with shameless panache, accompanying an able crew of young singers (including the soprano Carolyn Betty and the baritone Ryan Taylor) in songs on the seven deadly sins by Brahms, Weill ("The Lottery Agent's Tango"), Poulenc ("Chanson à Boire"), and Sondheim, among others. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 19 at 8.)

HIROKO SASAKI
The young Japanese pianist, in a recital sponsored by the Abby Whiteside Foundation, performs works by Berg, Debussy ("Estampes"), Chopin, and Schubert (the Sonata in G Major, D. 894). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 19 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
May 20-21 at 7:30: Matt Haimovitz takes a respite from his nationwide cello tour of honky-tonks and pizza parlors to alight at a somewhat more respectable venue, Olga Bloom's renovated coffee barge. He joins another maverick string player, the violinist Alexander Simionescu, and the pianist Micah Yui in works by Stravinsky, Liszt, Dvořák (the "Dumky" Trio), and Kodály (the crackling Duo for Violin and Cello, which should bring down the house). ♦ May 22 at 7:30 and May 23 at 4: The pianist Benjamin Hochman plays Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze" in addition to collaborative works by Mozart, Debussy, and Beethoven (the "Ghost" Trio, with the violinist Giora Schmidt and the cellist Sophie Shao). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

THE SYLVAN WINDS: "WINDS AND STRINGS"
The little wind band invites the Québécois string quartet Quatuor Arthur-LeBlanc to New York to help end their season with élan: a conductorless program of works by Spohr, Britten (the Sinfonietta, Op. 1), and Shostakovich (the "Symphony for Strings and Winds," Rudolf Barshai's arrangement of the String Quartet No. 3 in F Major). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-222-3569. May 20 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
May 20 at 8: Sergey Schepkin, a noted Bach pianist, offers Book II of "The Well-Tempered Clavier." ♦ May 21 at 8: Peter Serkin may have more progressive tastes than his father did, but he has remained steadfastly loyal to a group of modern composers who have maintained the conservative tradition in their own imaginative ways. They include Oliver Knussen (the Variations, Op. 24), Messiaen, Takemitsu, and Berio (including "Feuerklavier"), whose works grace a program grounded in Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations. (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949.)

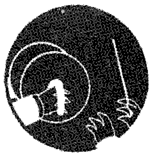
NEW YORK EARLY MUSIC SERIES
Ensemble Viscera, on lute, vihuela, bowed strings, and percussion, offers a concert of string-band music from the streets and theatres of Old and New Spain. (Nour Foundation, 322 W. 108th St. 718-636-5706. May 22 at 8.)

OPUS 21
Richard Adams's group, an ensemble that bridges the divide between contemporary classical and jazz, offers an evening of music by Aaron Copland, John Harbison (his saxophone sonata, "San Antonio"), Steve Reich, and Max Roach, among others. The jazz guitarist Gene Bertoncini is the ensemble's guest. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 22 at 8:30.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES
Members of the orchestra perform works by Dohnányi (the Serenade for String Trio) and Schubert (the Octet). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 23 at 3.)

MILLER THEATRE: "NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC IVES PORTRAIT"
The group's formidable percussionists, joined by the violinist James Ehnes and the conductor David

CLASSICAL NOTES



AIMEZ-VOUS BRAHMS?
Audiences have always loved Brahms's ensemble pieces and sonatas, but their uncanny combination of intimacy and rigor suggests that the composer, a musician's musician, wrote them for the delight of the performers alone. Chamber musicians take their measure with Brahms—if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere—and several new recordings reveal not only a continuing standard of excellence but a strong generational shift.

The violinist Gidon Kremer, the violist Yuri Bashmet, the cellist Mischa Maisky, and the pianist Martha Argerich came of age in the nineteen-sixties and seventies, and their expressively maximalist outlook informs their recording of the Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor (Deutsche Grammophon). Delicacy is not their strong suit, but every moment of the piece is fully lived: Argerich's bold and insistent lines stand out like shafts of light against the wine-dark tones of her three friends.

Argerich has recently recorded Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor (EMI) with two talented young Frenchmen, the violinist Renaud Capuçon and the cellist Gautier Capuçon, and the brothers also appear on a two-disk set of the three Brahms Piano Trios (Virgin) with the pianist Nicholas Angelich. They have competition from the classic sets by the Beaux Arts and the Istomin-Stern-Rose trios, but these elegant traditionalists more than hold their own, especially when they bring their lean and vibrant sounds to the terse and witty Trio No. 3 in C Minor.

The violinist Christian Tetzlaff manages to be both conservative and revolutionary, combining an almost Expressionist intensity with a sober musicianship that's in the best German tradition. He joins the superb young pianist Lars Vogt in the three Sonatas for Violin and Piano, the most appealing of Vogt's three-disk Brahms series (EMI), recorded live at the Heimbach Chamber Music Festival. The special character of each of the sonatas—the lyrical First, the teasing, romantic Second, and the gruff, symphonic Third—is poignantly realized and scrupulously detailed.

—*Russell Platt*

Robertson, use Ives's "From the Steeples and the Mountains" (from 1901) as a springboard to present works by some of the "ultra-modern" composers who revered him—Cowell, Cage, Varèse ("Ionisation"), and Lou Harrison ("Suite for Violin and American Gamelan"). (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. May 24 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The venerable string-quartet festival fires the summer season's first shot, a seventy-fifth-anniversary benefit concert of works by Mozart and Prokofiev ("Peter and the Wolf," narrated by Sam Waterston); the players include the pianist Ruth Laredo, the flutist Eugenia Zukerman, and members of the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players. (Routes 63 and 126, Falls Village, Conn. May 22 at 3. For benefit seating and for lawn and terrace tickets, call 860-824-7126.)

CONCERTS AT TANNERY POND
Christian Steiner's musical fiefdom, ensconced in an acoustically splendid Shaker tannery, opens its season with members of the Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra performing works by Patrick Zimmerli and Brahms (the Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor). (Darrow School, Route 20, New Lebanon, N.Y. 888-820-1696. May 22 at 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

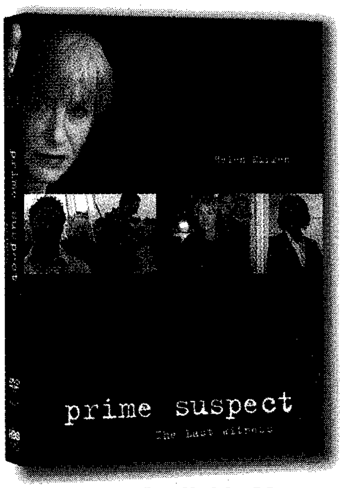
"NEW YORK: THE RIDE"
A new show at the New York Transit Museum Gallery Annex takes on perhaps the most typical Gotham experience—riding the subway—through cartoons and covers from this magazine. This little look at life underground demonstrates how times have changed (a drawing by P. C. Vey depicts post-September 11th anxiety) and how they haven't (the magazine's first issue, in 1925, carried a cartoon by Alfred Frueh that jokes about keeping the cars clean). Throughout the show, artists find humor in such nuisances as graffiti, overcrowding, and delays, which, in the end, is worth more than a lifetime supply of MetroCards. (Grand Central Terminal. For more information, call 212-878-0106. Through July 18.)

"PACIFIKA"
The second annual New York Hawaiian Film Festival features screenings, hula dancing, readings, and workshops focussed on life in the fiftieth state. (May 21-23. For more information, call 212-966-3378.)

RED HOOK WATERFRONT ARTS FESTIVAL
The Urban Bush Women dance troupe and the Afro-beat band Heritage O.P. join arts groups from the neighborhood on the Beard Street Pier, in Brooklyn. (May 22 from 1 to 5. For more information, call 718-287-2224.)

READINGS
May 19 at 6:30: The "Selected Shorts" series presents the actors Eli Wallach, Dawn Akemi Saito, and Aasif Mandvi, who will read work from the Asian-American Writer's Workshop. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ May 24 at 7: As part of its "New Work Now!" series, the Public Theatre presents the Scottish playwright David Grieg, who will read from his drama "Outlying Islands." (425 Lafayette St. 212-260-2400.) ♦ May 25 at 7:30: Vijay Seshadri and Glyn Maxwell read from their poetry. (Russian Samovar, 256 W. 52nd St. Tickets at the door.)

TALKS
May 19 at 6: The novelists Francisco Goldman and Colm Toibin discuss writing historical novels. (South Court Auditorium, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For reservations, which are required, call 212-930-0084.) ♦ May 24 at 6:30: The journalist Gregory Couch talks about the first winter ascent of Cerro Torre, in the Patagonian Andes. (Explorers Club, 46 E. 70th St. 212-628-8383.)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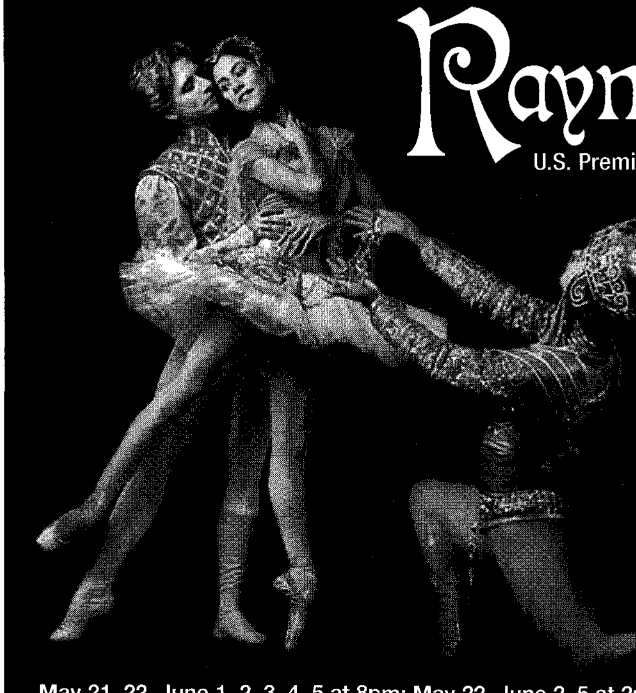
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MOVIES OPENING

CONTROL ROOM
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 21. (Film Forum.)

LOVE ME IF YOU DARE
Yann Samuell's début film is a love story about two childhood friends who continually dare each other to perform outrageous tasks. In French. Opening May 21. (Sunshine Cinema.)

MY MOTHER LIKES WOMEN
A comedy, set in Spain, in which three daughters learn that their mother has fallen for a Czech woman, who they suspect is a gold-digger. With Leonor Watling. Written and directed by Inés París and Daniela Fejerman. In Spanish. Opening May 21. (Angelika Film Center.)

SHREK 2
In this sequel to the animated hit, the ogre Shrek and his newly transformed ogre bride, Fiona, go to visit her shocked parents. The voice cast includes Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, John Cleese, and Julie Andrews. Opening May 19.

STAR SPANGLED TO DEATH!
Ken Jacobs's experimental six-hour epic is an assemblage of film and audio artifacts about the dark side of American culture. Opening May 21. (Anthology Film Archives.)

STATESIDE
A romantic drama about a teen-age delinquent (Jonathan Tucker) who joins the Marines and meets a troubled pop musician (Rachael Leigh Cook) while on leave. With Agnes Bruckner, Val Kilmer, and Carrie Fisher. Written and directed by Reverge Anselmo. Opening May 21.

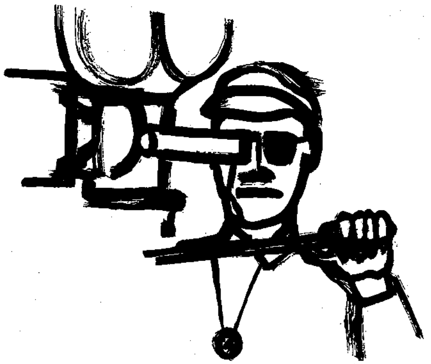
S21: THE KHMER ROUGE KILLING MACHINE
Rithy Panh, a filmmaker whose family was killed during the Cambodian genocide, directed this documentary about the atrocities at a Khmer Rouge prison. In Khmer. Opening May 19. (Film Forum.)

TWIST
A modern-day version of "Oliver Twist," set in the gay underworld of Montreal. With Joshua Close and Nick Stahl. Written and directed by Jacob Tierney. Opening May 21. (Quad Cinema.)

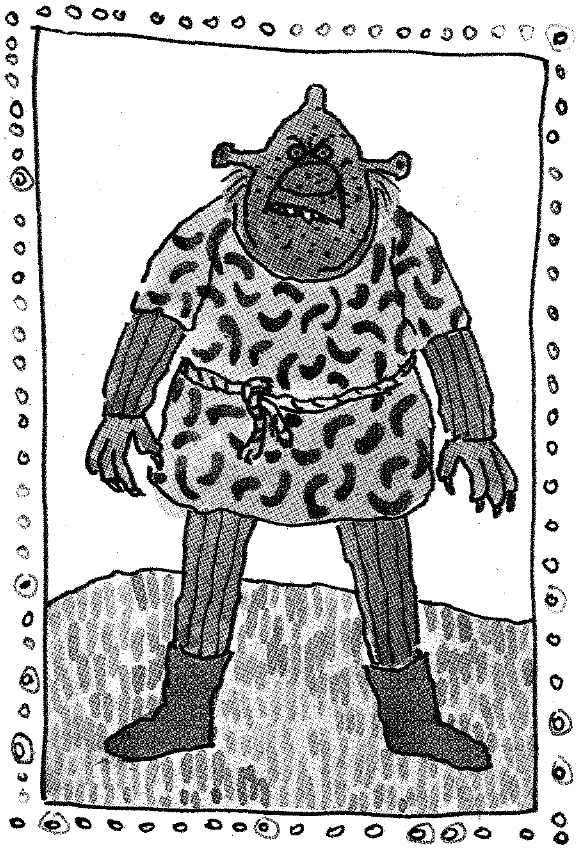
UNION SQUARE
Stephen J. Szklarski's documentary about heroin addicts in New York City. Opening May 21. (Cinema Village.)

FILM NOTES

COFFEE AND CIGARETTES
Cinematic doodles from the writer-director Jim Jarmusch. The movie, seventeen years in the making, consists of a series of black-and-white vignettes involving caffeine and nicotine. While those two substances complement each other, Jarmusch, ever the hip mad scientist, throws together odd combinations of actors and singers. Some pairings—like the laconic comic Steven Wright and the Italian yo-yo Roberto Benigni—turn out to be duds, but other encounters—like the one between the hip-hoppers the RZA and the GZA and a woozy Bill Murray—have a singular, irreproducible chemistry. Jarmusch doesn't have any grand theme; he's just playing around. Steve Coogan (of "24 Hour Party People" fame) and Alfred Molina parody the awkward Hollywood meeting of a rising star and a fading veteran. Best of all is Cate Blanchett, who, thanks to camera trickery, plays both halves of a conversation between a starlet and her resentful, bohemian cousin—she alternates between the slatternly and the prim with only a wig and body language. Finally, the former Warhol associate Taylor Mead gives the film a wonderful valedictory moment when he mysteriously hears Mahler's "I Have Lost Track of the World."—*Michael Agger* (Lincoln Square and Sunshine Cinema.)



ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND
Yes, it's another attempt by the screenwriter Charlie Kaufman to replace the antique notion of cinema as persuasive entertainment with that of cinema as some strange, whirring device for the disorientation of the human brain. Jim Carrey plays Joel and Kate Winslet plays Clementine, who fall in love and out of love and back in love again. Fair enough, but Kaufman and the director, Michel Gondry, run the whole story in rewind, as if to prove the Shakespearean theorem that journeys end in lovers' meeting. Just to complicate the issue, Tom Wilkinson plays a dodgy doctor who can, for a fee, wipe the memory of a chosen individual, adored or otherwise, from your mind—a treatment of which both Joel and Clementine avail themselves. The conceit writhes with implausibility, yet it also gives off flashes of high-tech, low-down beauty, as scenes of tenderness begin to go grievously blank before the sweethearts' eyes. Carrey's latest effort to elude, or at least refine, his loony persona is more sincere than convincing, and it is left to Winslet, at once fierce and footloose, to carry the show. On the eighth viewing, say, the damn thing might even make sense. With Mark Ruffalo, Elijah Wood, and a blissed-out Kirsten Dunst—what is she on?—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 3/22/04.) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)



Opening May 19, the animated movie "Shrek 2," based on characters created by the artist William Steig.

FANNY AND ALEXANDER
Ingmar Bergman's festive and full-bodied dream play—a vision of family life as a gifted boy might have perfected it, replacing his strict family (Bergman's father was a clergyman) with a generous-hearted theatrical clan. In what Bergman said would be his final movie, his obsessions are turned into stories, and he tells them to us—he makes us a beribboned present of his Freudian-gothic dream world. The movie is scaled big; it runs for three hours and ten minutes, and its lovingly placed warm gingerbreading is enormously enjoyable. But the conventionality of the thinking in the film is rather shocking. It's as if Bergman's neuroses had been tormenting him for so long that he cut them off and went sprinting back to Victorian health and domesticity. Cinematography by Sven Nykvist. Originally released in 1983. In Swedish.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; May 21-25.)

GOOD BYE, LENIN!
Christiane (Katrin Sass), a saintly East German Communist, falls into a coma just before the Berlin Wall comes down, in 1989. When she awakens, her son, Alex (Daniel Brühl), creates a kind of ersatz reality for her—a living museum of Communism—in which nothing has changed. He gets his cranky sister and a group of embarrassed neighbors to take part in the charade, going so far as to work with a filmmaker buddy on fake news broadcasts about the unending triumphs of a regime that no longer exists. This social satire was directed by Wolfgang Becker, whose background is in TV, and the movie often plays like a series of television-comedy skits, some of them funny and incisive, some larkish and insubstantial. Yet beneath the slapstick surface lies a sombre German heart: the point of the fable is that Communism in Germany was always an ersatz reality—that for forty years Party leaders were creating a large-scale version of the fiction that Alex creates in his mother's bedroom. In German.—*David Denby* (3/8/04) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

I'M NOT SCARED
A stirring and beautifully made poetic thriller about the natural gallantry of a young boy. Michele (Giuseppe Cristiano), a frisky ten-year-old, is spending a carefree summer in the golden wheat fields of southern Italy when he finds something unaccountable—a tiny, pale creature kept captive in a pit near an abandoned farmhouse. He forms a bond with this ghost, who turns out to be a boy his own age, and decides to feed him and take him out for air. At the same time, Michele tries to penetrate the mysterious goings on at his house, where the adults, including the violent roughnecks his father brings home, quarrel viciously. Like René Clément's classic "Forbidden Games," the movie reveals the sordid behavior of adults as seen through the eyes of half-comprehending but pure-hearted children. The style is at times startlingly freewheeling, as if the events emerged from a child's dream, a storybook world of monsters and rescuers. Adapted by Niccolò Ammaniti and Francesca Marciano from Ammaniti's novel. Directed by Gabriele Salvatores; cinematography by Italo Petriccione. In Italian.—*D.D.* (4/12/04) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea West, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

KILL BILL VOL. 2
If the two parts of Quentin Tarantino's movie are ever spliced together, the combined version may work as a kind of gleaming, wafer-thin pop epic. But this film, taken alone, is a shapeless mess, despite its redundant framing device. The Bride (Uma Thurman) continues her revenge from "Vol. 1" against the old friends who did her dirt, the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad (DiVAS). None of it

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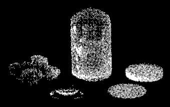

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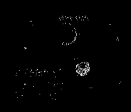

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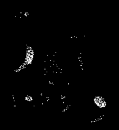

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makes much sense (nor is it supposed to)—characters are introduced only to be murdered or dropped, and the visual style alludes promiscuously to martial-arts classics and Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns. If the violence of the first film was a fountains-of-blood spectacle, the violence of this movie is in the taunting, heavy-menace style of old comic books and B movies. What's most shocking about these scenes is not the heartlessness but how bad Tarantino's ear has become. The man who seemed to reinvent writing for the screen in "Pulp Fiction"—pop-surreal, nasty, and blazingly funny—has settled into a pseudo-suave idiom. With Michael Madsen, Darryl Hannah in an eye patch, Gordon Liu in a cotton-candy beard as a supercilious mountaintop kung-fu master, and David Carradine as Bill, who, confronted at last, turns out to be a sonorous bore with tired eyes.—*D.D.* (4/19 & 26/04) (Battery Park 11, Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LAWS OF ATTRACTION

A tale of two attorneys—how much fun can you pack into one movie? Pierce Brosnan plays the raffish and highly successful Daniel, whereas Julianne Moore plays the uptight and highly successful Audrey. (Somewhere, there must be a screenwriter's software package that creates these setups to order.) Both lawyers are expert in the bitter niceties of divorce, and they keep going head to head in court. They also get drunk one night and wind up going toe to toe in bed. They then get drunk again, on a trip to Ireland, and wind up married. There is something insulting in the suggestion that smart people will make dramatic moves only under the influence of alcohol, but, then, the whole of Peter Howitt's movie gives off the reek of condescension—witness the rambling Irish revellers, the outdated British punk (Michael Sheen) whom Daniel represents, and so on. Brosnan seems at ease, Moore is as crackable as fine porcelain, and both of them cast around for funny lines that never come their way. Frances Fisher, playing Audrey's embarrassingly hip mom, fares rather better. "Are you really fifty-six?" she is asked. "Parts of me are," she replies. With Parker Posey.—*A.L.* (5/3/04) (Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

MAN ON FIRE

Lurid, blood-soaked, operatic junk. Denzel Washington plays a burned-out government assassin hired to protect a rich businessman's daughter (Dakota Fanning) in Mexico City. The first half of this overlong film deals with the bond that quietly develops between the two, the second with the inevitable kidnapping, which sends Washington on a torrid revenge streak. The director Tony Scott's overblown style is in full flower: the jittery camera and disjointed editing combine to create exquisite audience torture.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

MEAN GIRLS

A new term at high school is even more of a trauma for Cady (Lindsay Lohan) than it is for everybody else, since she is not just an out-of-towner but an out-of-Africa, her parents having raised her as a bush baby. Now she is confronted with the complexity of school loyalties and fads, which—as we are reminded by innumerable slo-mo sequences with an added roartrack—are twice as bloodlusty as the lives of African fauna. Her first friends are Janis (Lizzy Caplan) and Damian (Daniel Franzese), who dare her to hang out with the second wave—a trio of acid beauties, led by the queenly Regina (Rachel McAdams). The twist is that Cady, in pretending to fall for their spoilt ways, really does fall for them, and the problem is that we ourselves never fall for this notion of Cady as weak-willed. Though the movie sags in the second half, your spirits are kept up by the steady flow of slashing lines—courtesy of Tina Fey, who not only wrote the script but also stars as Cady's teacher. If anything, the grownups—especially the school principal, played by Tim Meadows, of whom the picture needs much more—tend to nudge these pushy teenagers into the wings. The movie, produced by Lorne Michaels and directed by Mark Waters, is often funny, but it was conceived by people who are plainly wiser and more worldly than their target audience, and there's something about that discrepancy that, you know, totally sucks.—*A.L.* (5/10/04) (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN

It's been twenty-five years since believers everywhere got steamed up by this slice of Python mischief, and the joke—to nobody's surprise—is now firmly on them. In retrospect, this reputedly scurrilous work, aflame with heresy, turns out to be a bundle of schoolboyish jokes, many on the gentle side, and all of them scornful of political and religious excess. Graham Chapman, almost milky in his geniality, plays Brian, who is born down the street from Jesus Christ—so close that the Magi, uncertain about the exact stable over which the star has paused, offer gifts to the wrong babe, then grab them back again. As an adult, Brian becomes a highly reluctant prophet, only to be crucified for his insignificant sins. Most of the lead roles are taken by Python regulars such as John Cleese, Michael Palin, and Terry Jones (who somehow found time, while playing Brian's hag of a mother, to direct the movie as well). Rest assured that the film is not being reissued solely in order to celebrate its birthday. To put the matter in Pythonspeak: Nudge, nudge, Mel Gibson, say no more.—*A.L.* (5/3/04) (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC

One of the greatest of all movies. The director, Carl Dreyer, based the script on the trial records, and the testimony appears to be given for the first time. (Cocteau wrote that this film "seems like a historical document from an era in which the cinema didn't exist.") As the five gruelling cross-examinations follow each other, Dreyer turns the camera on the faces of Joan and the judges, and in giant closeups he reveals his interpretation of their emotions. In this enlargement, Joan and her persecutors are shockingly fleshly—isolated with their sweat, warts, spittle, and tears, and (as no one used makeup) with startlingly individual contours, features, and skin. No other film has so subtly linked eroticism with religious persecution. Falconetti's Joan may be the finest performance ever recorded on film. With Silvain as Cauchon, Michel Simon, André Berley, Maurice Schutz, and the young Antonin Artaud—as Massieu he's the image of passionate idealism. The film is silent, but as you often see the (French) words forming you may have the illusion that you've heard them. Originally released in 1928.—*P.K.* (Anthology Film Archives; May 22.)

THE SADDEST MUSIC IN THE WORLD

Another straightforward slice of corporate entertainment from Guy Maddin. Actually, by his standards this new picture really is close to intelligible. Isabella Rossellini, sporting a wig that appears to have been woven from cold egg noodles, plays Lady Port-Huntly, rich but legless, who runs a competition to discover, as the title suggests, the saddest music in the world. One of her former lovers (Mark McKinney) offers to represent America; he also has a drunken father (David Fox) and a pixielike girlfriend (Maria de Medeiros) who is both amnesiac and nymphomaniac—a far from impractical arrangement, when you consider it. The movie, set in Winnipeg in 1933, is shot with Maddin's habitual blend of jumpiness, spookiness, halation, and archaic levels of scratch and grain. The result does not so much flirt with the ridiculous as lie back and let the ridiculous do more or less what it wants, and Maddin aficionados will ask for nothing more. Once again, however, the unconverted may wonder what the fuss is about; when a director's storytelling is as overheated as this, why should the stories themselves have to be so wildly undercooked?—*A.L.* (5/10/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER . . . AND SPRING

A Buddhist monk (Oh Young-soo) and his disciple, a young boy, live in an enchanted setting—a temple set at the center of a very still lake high in the mountains of Korea. The boy grows up, makes mistakes, and receives punishment from his master, but all is calm and orderly until a young woman enters the scene—a disruption that leads to violence and, eventually, to renewal. Kim Ki-duk's movie has a formal grace that is nearly intoxicating: the cinematography revels in the exquisite quiet of the lake, with its natural abundance rendered in a palette of infinitely subtle grays and pale blues. The formal perfection makes one willing to overlook an implicitly priggish rejection of sexuality and the normal glories and temptations of the world outside. And the movie's piety is redeemed by a vagrant and rather subversive sense of humor that keeps the rituals of Buddhist discipline fresh and humanly appealing. In Korean.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

13 GOING ON 30

Jennifer Garner and Mark Ruffalo are pure eye candy in this frothy bit of nonsense about a thirteen-year-old girl who, through a magical movie moment, is propelled into her future self. As another entry in the long list of body-switch comedies, the script deals with the emotional complexities of growing up too soon with a sugary grace that avoids, for the most part, the queasy pitfalls of the character's newfound sexuality. Garner plays the gamine well—she has a knack for teen-age awkwardness.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

TROY

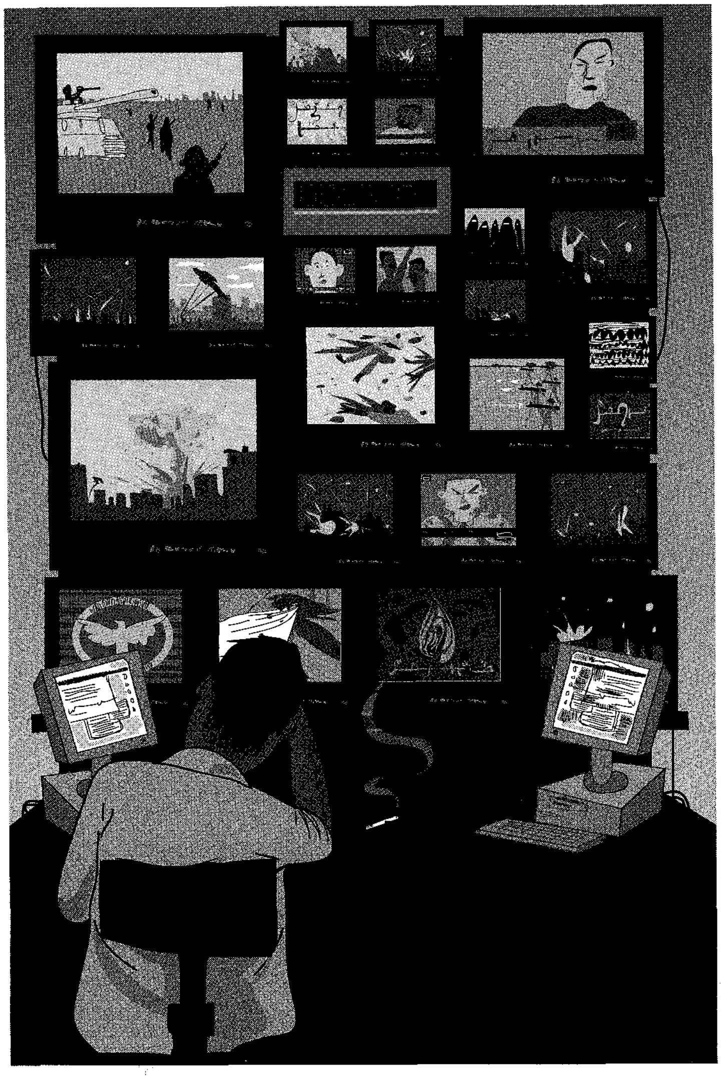
Adapting Homer's mighty Iliad into a two-and-a-half-hour spectacle, the writer David Benioff and the director Wolfgang Petersen compressed events, removed the mischievous gods, and turned the legends into a comprehensible political struggle. Agamemnon (Brian Cox), the chief of the Greek expedition, uses the loss of Helen to the Trojans as an excuse to conquer the eastern Aegean. The battles in front of the walls of Troy are cataclysmic and frightening, and the duels are fought out in the open, in clear space. You can tell, as at a championship boxing match, what's at stake in turning left rather than right, feinting rather than thrusting. Surrounded by an expert cast of international actors, Brad Pitt, as Achilles, tries and fails to speak in some classy mid-Atlantic accent, but he's fast as lightning in his movements. Eric Bana, as the Trojan Hector, is slower as a fighter, more dogged and earth-bound, but he makes a fine reluctant warrior. The ladies do not distinguish themselves, and James Horner's music—wordless wailing women, hollow pounding drums—comes off as an ominous cliché. With Peter O'Toole as Priam and Orlando Bloom as Paris. Cinematography by Roger Pratt. Shot in Malta and Mexico.—*D.D.* (5/17/04) (Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

TWENTYNINE PALMS

A guy and a girl, sex and violence, a sinister landscape—that's all there is in the latest provocation from the infuriating yet talented French director Bruno Dumont. David (David Wissak), who is some sort of location scout, and Katia (Katia Golubeva), a French-speaking Russian girl with no apparent occupation or interests, drive in a red Hummer through the sinister high desert of California. What are they doing there? They are in love but have nothing to say to each other. They are trying to make sex do the work of everything else, and, for a while, of course, it can; their lovemaking, photographed straight on, without lyricism or sensuality, is a successful assertion of will against a dead sky. Dumont arranges the two figures in the hostile landscape so they seem overmastered by it, then he holds the shots longer than expected, until menace builds up in the surrounding silence and our nerves are close to snapping. In Dumont's apocalyptic terms, the man and woman work their way to the end of both the magnificence and the poverty of instinct, where sex has nowhere to go but into death. Bleak, surly, but impressive. In French.—*D.D.* (4/12/04) (Cinema Village.)

VAN HELSING
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

VAMPYR
Most vampire movies are so silly that this film by Carl Dreyer—a great vampire film—hardly belongs to the genre. Dreyer preys upon our subconscious fears. Dread and obsession are the film's substance, and its mood is evocative, dreamy, spectral. Death hovers over everyone. The cast is headed by Julian West (the movie name of Nicholas de Gunzburg), with Henriette Gérard as the vampire, and Rena Mandel and Sybille Schmitz as her potential victims. The incomparable photographic effects are the work of Rudolph Maté. Movie-lovers may cherish what appears to be Dreyer's homage to Cocteau—the use of the little heart from "The Blood of a Poet." Originally released in 1932. In Danish, no subtitles.—*P.K.* (Anthology Film Archives; May 23.)


At Film Forum, "Control Room," a documentary about Al Jazeera.

MAXIMILIAN BODE

ALSO PLAYING

THE AGRONOMIST
First & 62nd Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.

CARANDIRU
Angelika Film Center.

SINCE OTAR LEFT
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

SPRINGTIME IN A SMALL TOWN
Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

STRAYED
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

SUPER SIZE ME
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THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema Classics, 332 E. 11th St. (212-677-6309).
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
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Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Preview screening. May 21 at 7:30: "Zatoichi" (2004, Takeshi Kitano; in Japanese). ♦ A survey of computer animation. May 22 at 1 and May 23 at 4: "Silicon Stories" (1987-2003). ♦ May 22 at 4: "Alternative Renderings" (1987-2003). ♦ May 23 at 1: "Digital Animation: The State of the Art" (2003). ♦ Repertory nights. May 22-23 at 6:30: "The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant" (1973, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—"Finnish Experimental Film and Video Art." May 20 at 7:30: "The Future Is Not What It Used to Be" (2003, Mika Taanila). ♦ May 21 at 7:30: "Love Is a Treasure" (2002, Eija Liisa Ahtila). ♦ May 22 at 6: A compilation of films by Eino Ruutsalo and others (1999-2001). ♦ May 22 at 8 and May 23 at 6 and 8: Compilations from the Finnish art association AV-ARKKI. ♦ The *Onion* film series. May 20 at 8: "Mi Vida Loca" (1994, Allison Anders). ♦ Essential cinema. May 22 at 3:30: "The Passion of Joan of Arc" (†). ♦ May 23 at 4: "Vampyr" (†).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—"Cinema Tropical." May 19 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "A Red Bear" (2002, Adrián Caetano; in Spanish). ♦ A Wong Kar-Wai retrospective. Most films are in Cantonese. May 20 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Buenos Aires Zero Degrees" (1999, Amos Lee and Kwan Pun Leung; written by Kar-Wai). ♦ May 21 at 2 and 6:45: "As Tears Go By" (1988). ♦ May 21 at 4:30 and 9: "The Haunted Cop Shop" (1987, Jeffrey Lau; written by Kar-Wai). ♦ May 22 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "In the Mood for Love" (2000). ♦ May 23 at 2 and 6:45: "Days of Being Wild" (1990). ♦ May 23 at 4:30 and 9: "Fallen Angels" (1995). ♦ The films of Jerzy Stuhr. May 24 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "Love Stories" (1997). ♦ May 25 at 4:30, 6:45, and 9: "The Weather for Tomorrow" (2003).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—May 19-20 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:40: "Godzilla" (1954, Ishiro Honda; in Japanese). ♦ Starting May 21: An Ingmar Bergman retrospective. May 21-25 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Fanny and Alexander" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through June 22: "Nouveaux Cinéastes: New Filmmakers." May 25 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Mon Idole" (2002, Guillaume Canet; in French).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. May 21-22: "Dazed and Confused" (1993, Richard Linklater).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—May 22-23 at 2 and 6:30: "The Triplets of Belleville" (2003, Sylvain Chomet; in French). ♦ May 22-23 at 4 and 8:30: "The Fog of War" (2003, Errol Morris).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through May 31: "Stranger on the Prowl: The Films of Joseph Losey." May 19 at 2:30 and 6:30: "Finger of Guilt" (1956). ♦ May 19 at 4:30 and 8:30 and May 20 at 2:30 and 6:30: "Blind Date" (1958). ♦ May 20 at 4:30 and 8:30: "Stranger on the Prowl" (1952). ♦ May 21 at 1, 5, and 9 and May 24 at 3: "These Are the Damned" (1962). ♦ May 21 at 3 and 7 and May 24 at 1: "Time Without Pity" (1957). ♦ May 25 at 3: "Mr. Klein" (1976). ♦ May 22-23: "A Match Made in Heaven: Fassbinder & Schygulla." All films are in German. May 22 at 2:30 and May 23 at 5: "Effi Briest" (1974). ♦ May 22 at 5:30 and May 23 at 7:45: "The Marriage of Maria Braun" (1979). ♦ May 22 at 8 and May 23 at 2:30: "Lili Marleen" (1981).

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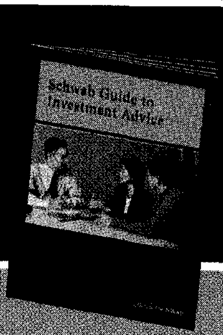

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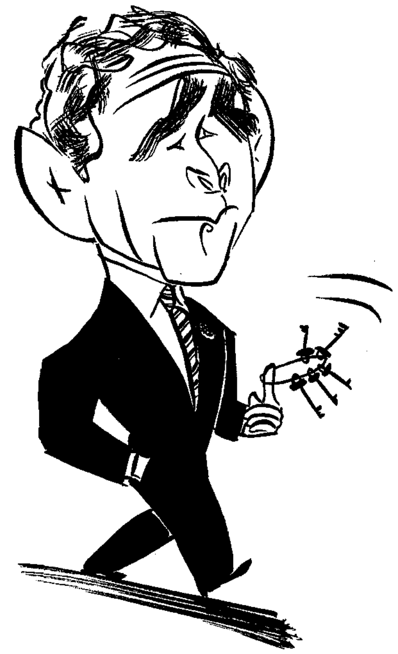
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
UNCONVENTIONAL WAR

One passage of the Declaration of Independence which seldom gets quoted in Fourth of July oratory is the final item on the long list of George III's "injuries and usurpations." It's the bit where the delegates to the Continental Congress accuse the King of Great Britain of endeavoring "to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions." Like the ideologues of 2004, the revolutionaries of 1776 had less than perfect empathy for the unruly, alien culture upon which they were forcibly conferring the benefits of enlightened Christian civilization. (Their plea, however, was different: *Don't* bring 'em on.)

The Declaration's invocation of the Indians' alleged "rule of warfare" suggests that there were other, better such rules. So there were, arguably, but they took the forms of widely varying custom, of unwritten codes of gentlemanly conduct and honor, and of national laws regulating national armies. The codification of rules of warfare into laws of war—that is, into formal, written, supposedly binding international agreements—was a product of the nineteenth century. It arose from the same can-do spirit of the age as did the invention of mechanized wars fought by huge conscript armies. The visionary behind that humanitarian effort—its Napoleon—was a young Swiss businessman named Henri Dunant, who, in 1859, witnessed the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino, fought in northern Italy between the French and the Austrians. So horrified was Dunant by the sufferings of the wounded, thousands of whom died of injuries that could have been treated if there had been anyone to treat them, that, in short order, he founded what would become the International Committee of the Red Cross and convened an international conference to draft a new kind of universal treaty. The result, in 1864, was the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field—the first Geneva Convention. By 1867, it had been ratified by all the great powers of Europe. The United States did not ratify it until 1882, but in 1863 President Lincoln's War Department had drawn up its own set of rules, which anticipated many of the provisions not only of Dunant's Convention but also of the revised and extended versions of 1906 and 1929. The four Geneva Conventions that are in effect today—covering the treatment of the wounded on land and at sea, prisoners of war, and civilians in time of war—were drafted in 1949, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Some two hundred countries have ratified them, including all the members of the United Nations.



There is something a little unsettling about the suggestion that war is just another routine human activity, like driving or stock trading, that needs to be conducted according to the rules lest someone get hurt. Baroness Bertha von Suttner, the 1905 Nobel Peace laureate, once remarked that improving the laws of war was like regulating the temperature while boiling someone in oil. Yet the Geneva Conventions have been surprisingly successful, given that the activity they regulate is in many ways inherently lawless. The reason is not just that gentlemen prefer to slaughter each other in the most ethical way possible. To the extent that the Conventions have been observed, they have been observed mainly because it was in the interest, mutual or individual, of warring entities to observe them. If you took their soldiers prisoner,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

they might take yours; and if you tortured theirs they might torture yours. If you made a habit of torturing and killing enemy prisoners, then enemy soldiers and enemy units would be reluctant to surrender. As long as the other side was still strong enough to fight, mistreatment of prisoners was, in theory, deterrable; once the other side was too weak to carry on, it was pointless.

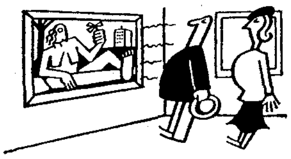
George W. Bush's Administration has never had much use for international agreements. As soon as it took office, it set about unencumbering itself from those it considered irksome, such as the Kyoto environmental protocol, the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, and the statute of the International Criminal Court. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Geneva Conventions, among other niceties, were added to its list of obstacles to be got around. The "war on terror," we have been told, incessantly and for the most part correctly, is not like other wars. The Iraqi Army, as we know from the stories of Private Jessica Lynch and others, seems to have treated its American captives without undue cruelty. But the real enemy, the terrorist enemy of Al Qaeda and its ilk, is stateless and fanatical, ruthless and undeterrable. It is an enemy that takes hostages but never takes prisoners, an enemy that congratulates itself on murdering the helpless, as the sickening, videotaped executions of Daniel Pearl and, this week, Nicholas Berg demonstrate all too vividly. In conventional wars, prisoners seldom have much useful information to yield up; in this war, information—"intelligence"—of the kind that terrorists may be presumed to possess trumps armor. The temptation to torture, to abuse, to humiliate is strong, and one need not be a sadist to authorize or overlook it.

In past wars, there were both ethical reasons and practical reasons for adhering to the Geneva Conventions—soft reasons and hard reasons. In the campaign against terror, the hard men of the Bush Pentagon seem to have concluded, there would be only soft reasons. What they are learning—what one hopes they are learning—from the global political catastrophe prompted by the revelations from Abu Ghraib and other military prisons is that there were hard reasons, too. The damage—to the unravelling "coalition," to America's standing everywhere in the world, to the chances of a decent outcome in Iraq and the Middle East, to the goal of eradicating terrorism rather than nourishing it, and to the morale of our long-suffering troops in Iraq—is unfathomable.

The grotesqueries at Abu Ghraib seem to have been exceptional in their stupidity and senselessness. But, as Pierre Krähenbühl, the director of operations for the International Committee of the Red Cross, told a news conference in Geneva recently, the abuse at Abu Ghraib represented more than isolated acts. "We were dealing here with a broad pattern, not individual acts," Krähenbühl said. "There was a pattern and a system." And there was an atmosphere of something like impunity. It emanated from the top: from a Secretary of Defense who designated "unlawful combatants" as a category of people who merit no rights; from a White House counsel who derided the Geneva Conventions for insufficient "flexibility"; and from a President who, in his 2003 State of the Union address, seemed to boast of extrajudicial killings ("Let's put it this way," he said of certain suspected terrorists. "They are no longer a problem"). It remains to be seen if anyone other than a few enlisted men and women will be held accountable in any serious way. "This was not just a failure of leadership at the local command level," the *Army Times*, the weekly trade journal of the uniformed military, concluded last week in an unprecedentedly angry editorial. "This was a failure that ran straight to the top. Accountability here is essential—even if that means relieving top leaders from duty in a time of war." For that kind of accountability, the best—perhaps the only—chance will come on November 2nd.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

AT THE MUSEUMS
A PICASSO FACE-LIFT



It takes steady nerves to operate on a ninety-seven-year-old patient, especially when the patient is: (1) eight feet tall; (2) not sick; and (3) the cornerstone of modern art. For the past six months, Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," born in 1907, has been undergoing a major restoration in the Museum of Modern Art's temporary conservation studio, in Queens, and it is a pleasure to report that the painting looks almost alarmingly healthy. Having retained, decade after decade, its power to shock and disturb viewers, Picasso's bombshell, whose value is literally incalculable, will now shock them anew, because it looks so different. The colors are fresher and brighter, the flesh tones are fleshier, and the whole indecent ensemble seems to have broken out of its previous fixed space and entered a more fluid environment, an arena that is accessible and close at hand. What Picasso called his "first exorcism picture," with all its savage distortions and chthonic eroticism, can now be seen more clearly as a ravishingly seductive lesson in the art of painting.

James L. Coddington, MOMA's chief conservator, reports that the museum started about ten years ago to think about restoring "Demoiselles." "At the end of our big Matisse show in 1993," he said the other day, "John Elderfield"—the MOMA curator who organized the show—"put a few Picassos, including the 'Demoiselles,' in a room with Matisse's 'Bathers by a River,' from Chicago. In that context, 'Demoiselles' didn't speak as strongly and with the vigor that one would expect, and we thought that this probably was not Picasso's fault—that it could well be the state of the picture. It looked gray, and dull, and diminished. So we began to do a little background research."

Aside from a buildup of dirt since its last surface cleaning, in 1983, there was nothing really wrong with the picture: no crackling, no flaking paint, and no structural problems. Like many paintings, though, it had suffered at the hands of previous restorers. Until well past the midpoint of the last century, the so-called science of painting restoration embraced practices that are now considered harmful and for the most part unnecessary, such as relining. A canvas is relined by gluing another canvas to its back; this is done to strengthen the support, but it usually involves applying heat and pressure to both surfaces, and all too often this results in flattening or damaging the paint layer. The museum's research showed that "Demoiselles" had been relined by a restorer working for the French couturier Jacques Doucet,

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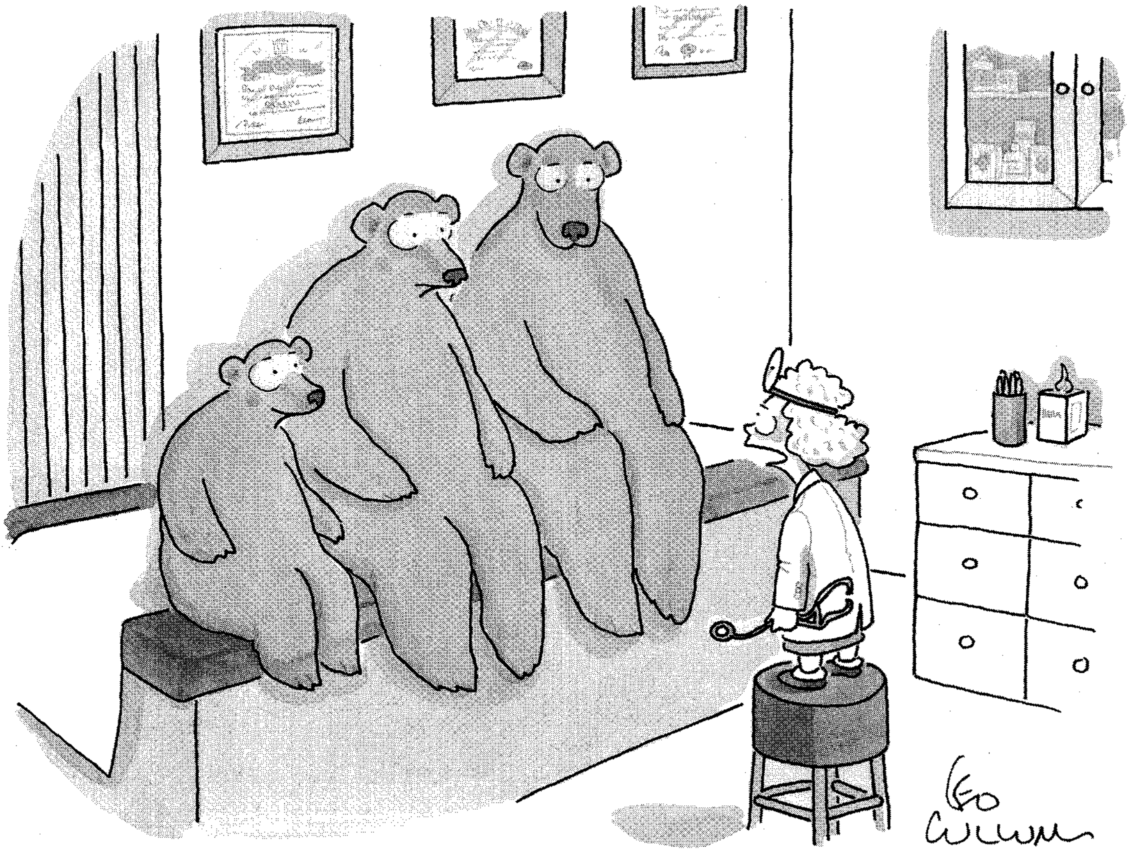

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who had bought it from Picasso in 1924.

The painting had also been varnished. Restorers and artists have long used clear varnishes to protect their paint surface and enhance the colors, but Picasso didn't varnish the "Demoiselles," for the same reason that he and Braque didn't varnish their early Cubist canvases. Varnishing provides a more or less homogeneous surface. Picasso and Braque were after something else, a contrast of textures in contiguous areas of the painting which would enliven the surface and convey a new sense of depth. John Elderfield thinks that Doucet's restorer may have varnished "Demoiselles," whose installation, on a landing at the top of a grand staircase in Doucet's apartment in Neuilly-sur-Seine, left it somewhat vulnerable to bibulous dinner guests. There is no doubt that it was varnished, or revarnished, in 1950, by a conservator at MOMA, which had acquired the painting in 1939. "I do think it was done with preservation in mind," Coddington said tactfully, "but in fact that doesn't necessarily preserve it. This is a classic, robust, straightforward oil painting. Picasso used really high-quality paint, and he was very good in his craft. To remove a varnish does expose the picture to potential hazards."

Coddington, Elderfield, and their peers at MOMA decided to remove the varnish and, at the same time, to undo as many mistakes by previous conservators as they could. The question was when to do it. "This is one of two or three pictures that people will make a special effort to come and see," Coddington said. "We all felt a responsibility to have it off view for as little time as possible." The opportunity finally came around last fall, after the big "Matisse Picasso" exhibition in Queens and before the museum's reopening in Manhattan in November.

The "Demoiselles" assignment went to Michael Duffy, who has been with MOMA's conservation department for ten years. After test-cleaning in a few marginal areas, Duffy worked his way inch by inch across the picture, cleaning off the accumulated dirt and grime with cotton swabs dipped in a "mild enzymatic solution," otherwise known as spit. Then he started removing the varnish. That took nearly three months, and was done with organic solvents. "The change is very subtle," Coddington observed. "As with every great picture, though, a great deal lives in the subtlety."

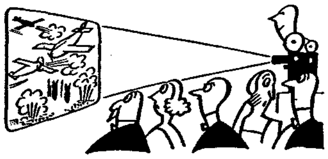
Duffy, a boyish-looking man who appears unfazed by his responsibilities, walked up close to the painting and indicated the vigorous, cascading brushstrokes that are now visible. "It's that sense of somebody touching the surface that I think is greatly retrieved," he said. Duffy dreamed recently that he came into the studio and saw that a corner of the picture had peeled back. "It was as if the figures were trying to come to life."

He has about two or three months' more work to do on it. Now that the retouchings of earlier restorers have been removed, along with the adhesive residue left by Doucet's relining, Duffy will do some "in-painting," or retouching, of his own, in small areas where paint has been lost. He will use special restoration paints which are soluble in solutions that do not affect the original pigments—everything he does has to be easily "reversible" by future conservators. The conservators haven't yet decided what to do about some faint vertical cracks running through the canvas, the result of its having been rolled up (and unrolled and rerolled) during its seventeen years in six successive Picasso studios. "Do we restore every little flaw?" Coddington said. "Not necessarily. Restoration is a balance between hubris and humility. Just the notion of touching this picture ought to make you stop."

Elderfield comes in at least once a week to see how things are going. "Famous pictures start to look like reproductions of themselves," he said. "They are reproduced so often that your memory of them is replaced by the memory of the reproduction. Well, this picture now doesn't look like any of its reproductions."

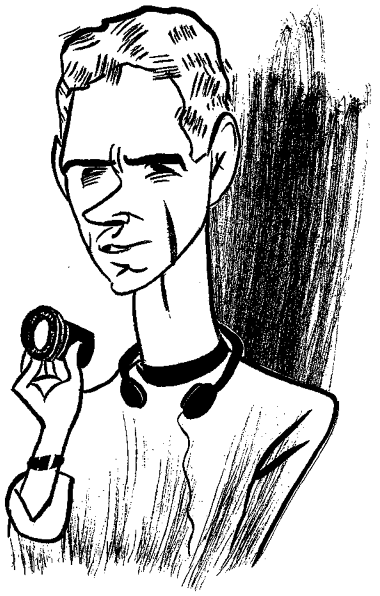
—*Calvin Tomkins*

THE PICTURES
WRECKED AGAIN



If you're planning to depict an attack on New York City in a disaster film, you need to bring your A game. For the same reason that deadly-virus movies are usually set in aseptic laboratories or, interchangeably, in the suburbs, radioactive spiders and ants and bees tend to terrorize small towns but stay well clear of the city—our cockroaches would annihilate them. Blobs and zombies? Please.

In the movie "Q," the winged god-serpent Quetzalcoatl announced its arrival in Manhattan by snacking on rooftop sunbathers. But there was something a little laid-back, a little slackerish, about its Aztec life style—a few citizens in swimsuits flailing in the jaws of a winged serpent would hardly make the cover of the *Post*. To leave a mark on New York City, you need an indelible visual: King Kong on the Empire State Building swatting at planes; the Beast from 20,000 Fathoms rampaging through Coney Island; Godzilla biting holes in the Brooklyn Bridge.



Roland Emmerich

You also need a sizable budget. "All those B and C disaster movies shoot in the suburbs because it's not as expensive," Roland Emmerich, the writer and director, said last week. Emmerich's new New York disaster movie, "The Day After Tomorrow," cost a hundred and twenty-five million dollars to make, even though most of it was filmed in a train-repair yard in Montreal. "To take on New York, you need serious money," he said.

Emmerich, who previously directed "Godzilla" and "Independence Day" (in which aliens blow up the Empire State Building and pretty much everything else), is accustomed to issuing commands like "Cue the taxicabs to be flung about like puny toys" and "Humans, assume expressions of awe at forces beyond your comprehension." "The Day After Tomorrow" features Emmerich's most menacing villain to date: global warming. In the movie, Dennis Quaid plays a stubborn, unheeded paleoclimatologist, and Ian Holm is a wrinkly British scientist who, having realized that the oceans have reached a "critical desalinization point," cries out, "Nothing like this has ever happened before!" Soon, the Atlantic rises with a mighty roar and surges through Manhattan (cue taxicabs). Then, as you might expect, supercooled air from the troposphere flash-freezes New York.

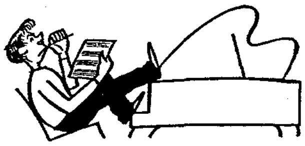
When he was working on "The Day After Tomorrow," Emmerich watched recent films such as "A.I." and "Deep Impact" to see how they handled putting the city underwater: What color should the liquid be? How much slosh and trickle should his "ice-flow, flood, and tidal-wave sound designer" layer in? "You don't want to repeat the same images," he said. "And you want to avoid the mistakes they made, the parts that don't look convincing. 'Deep Impact' had a much bigger tidal wave than ours, but we didn't want to go over the edge and have people laughing."

He went on, "Of course, if that much water did hit New York the city would be absolutely flattened, but you have to be a little sensitive after September 11th." Emmerich, who has an apartment in Tribeca, says he put a lot of thought into whether he ought to set another disaster movie here. "But New York is such a symbol of Western civilization," he said. "I finally felt that setting the film in another city would be an even bigger problem, because then the terrorists would have influenced where the catastrophe of weather strikes." (In other words, the terrorists will have won if they keep us from destroying New York onscreen.)

Inevitably, in New York-based disaster films, the Statue of Liberty takes a hit. When Emmerich was twelve, he saw the original "Planet of the Apes" at a drive-in in Virginia Beach, and the final image of the statue rising out of the sand lingered in his mind. "One shot in our movie, where the Statue of Liberty comes out of the snow, is nearly exactly the same," he said. Though the storm in "The Day After Tomorrow" has killed millions, the frozen torch of Liberty is still thrust high. The image is more resilient and hopeful than the one viewers encountered in "Independence Day," in which, Emmerich pointed out, "you see the Statue of Liberty floating sideways in the water, and in the background you see the totally destroyed skyline of New York." It probably cost less, too.

—*Tad Friend*

DRY RUN DEPT.
SH-H-H

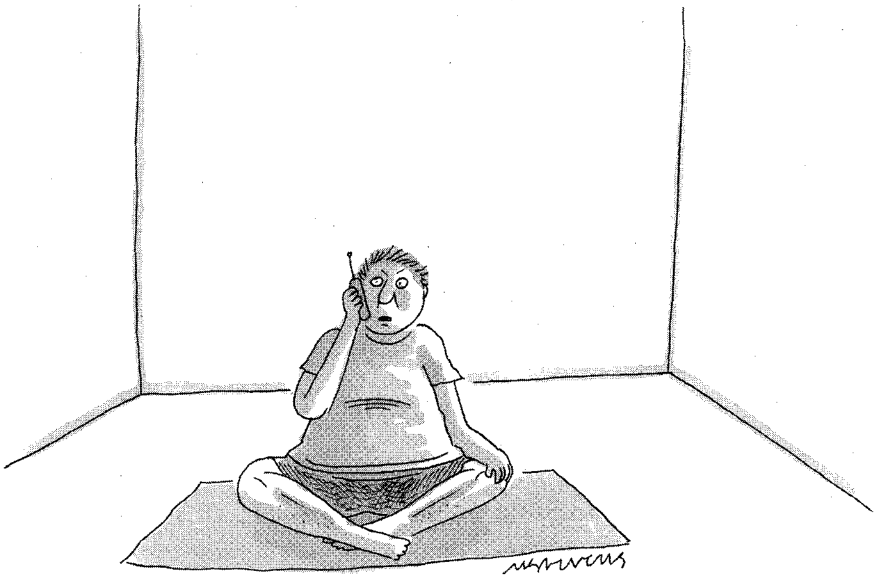


One recent morning, the French pianist Philippe Bianconi sat at a scruffy old Steinway in a practice room tucked away in the 92nd Street Y looking at the score in front of him with some perplexity. A slight man, with glasses and a wily, professorial smile, he said, "There is nothing to practice, nothing to play." The piece in question was the Czech composer Erwin Schulhoff's "Five Picturesques," which Bianconi was to perform two days later in a weekend of Schulhoff's music. Four of the five numbers he had down, but the central movement, hauntingly titled "In Futurum," presents an unusual problem: it is totally silent.

Although John Cage's "4'33" " (the 1952 piece in which a performer armed with a stopwatch maintains silence for the eponymous duration) is easily the world's most famous silent piece of music, Schulhoff's piece came first, in 1919. (In fact, even earlier, in 1897, a French humorist named Alphonse Allais composed nine blank measures under the title "Funeral March for the Obsequies of a Deaf Man.") Schulhoff's silence, furthermore, is very different from Cage's. "4'33"," originally written with entirely blank measures, is a model of Zen calm, whereas Schulhoff's page is about as busy and frenetic as silence can be. There are long rests and short rests, triplet and quintuplet rests, and fast runs of thirty-second-note rests. There are fermatas, exclamation points, question marks, and, in the middle and at the end, enigmatic signs that look like a hybrid of a half note and a smiley face. Most challenging of all is the opening direction to play "*tutto il canzone con espressione e sentimento ad libitum, sempre, sin al fine!*" ("the entire song with as much expression and feeling as you like, always, right to the end!"). Bianconi wondered what to do. "Should I just sit there?" he asked.

The Schulhoff weekend was part of a series devoted to composers who suffered in the Holocaust. Schulhoff was an avant-gardist who got hooked on jazz in the twenties and produced piano pieces that are an effervescent blend of modernist angularity and jazzy panache. When the Nazis took Czechoslovakia, he tried to flee to the Soviet Union but was arrested and taken to the concentration camp at Wülzburg, in Germany. He died there, of tuberculosis, in 1942.

Seated at the piano, Bianconi considered the music before him. "I see these pieces as very provocative," he said, likening one especially dissonant chord to a punch. Schulhoff had been going through a Dadaist phase. His Sonata



"Can I call you back, Ed? I'm in the moment here."

Erotica calls for a female singer to moan orgasmically, and "In Futurum" contains directions that are not merely challenging but downright nonsensical, like the time signatures—3/5 in one hand, 7/10 in the other. Scrutinizing the score, Bianconi began to wonder about the title: "This could almost be 'There will be no more art,' or art in the sense that it was meant at that time. Only silence." His attention wandering to the smiley faces, he noticed that one of the pair midway through the piece is frowning, but the ones at the end both smile—conflict and resolution, the fundamental dynamic of classical music, occurring in silence.

As he practiced, Bianconi paused occasionally to point out the quality of the music—a sophisticated piece of counterpoint here, a particularly scrunchy harmony there. When he came to the end of the second piece, "Ragtime," silence—unavoidably—fell. Bianconi shrugged and suppressed a giggle. With sudden decisiveness, he lowered the piano lid and shut his eyes. Seconds unfurled into minutes, while the room's soundproofed walls failed to eliminate the sounds of pianos in other practice rooms nearby. Then Bianconi opened up the piano, smiled briefly, and unleashed the boisterous, clanging chords of the next movement.

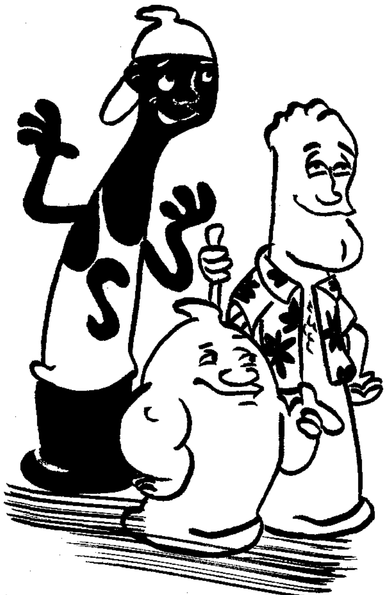
—*Leo Carey*

DEPT. OF PREVENTION
PITCHING RUBBERS

"We really need to destigmatize the condom," Brent Quinn said the other day, as he sipped from a Margarita. "Let's make the condom lovable. It's kind of a crap word. If you say, 'Hey, have you got an Amigo?' it's a bit more lovable."

Quinn, who is forty-five, is a South African screenwriter and comic who recently started an unlikely humor campaign to stop the spread of AIDS. He was talking about it at a burrito joint downtown shortly before returning to Johannesburg, following a week of meetings, in Washington and New York, with various government and international organizations: UNICEF, the State Department, the World Health Organization, the World Bank. Quinn and his business partner, the Canadian television producer Firdaus Kharas, were seeking funding for worldwide distribution of their new media project, The Three Amigos, which has become a cult sensation in South Africa.

The Three Amigos are talking prophylactics. They have been appearing for the past few months, as often as twenty times a day, in a series of animated public-service announcements on the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Their names are Shaft, Dick, and Stretch. Shaft is tall and black, and wears a backward-facing baseball cap. He speaks in a deep baritone. Dick is white, with an open Hawaiian shirt, and he talks like a surfer dude. Stretch is short, squat, and blue, with a Hispanic-sounding voice. (Quinn is partial to Stretch, whom he calls "an eager little chap.") Each of them cares principally about getting laid. According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Amigos are "wonderfully human-like characters."



The Three Amigos

"Essentially, they're these three amigos going on adventures," Quinn said. "The comedy is driven by three mates in a sort of contaminated war zone, out to get lucky." The Amigos' adventures—depicted in short cartoons ranging from fifteen seconds to one minute, and from tot-friendly to steamy—include space travel (punch line: "No condom, no blastoff"), soccer ("You just can't score without a condom"), an African safari ("It's a jungle out there—carry protection"), and bungee jumping ("Never make a leap of faith—always wear a condom"). They even have a sister, Femidom, a siren who lives in a pond in a mystical forest. They are a hit with young children—including Quinn's own, aged seven and nine.

Condoms, historically, have been extremely unpopular in South Africa—which has the world's largest H.I.V.-infected population—and elsewhere in the developing world. When Quinn used to travel around Africa, holdouts would tell him, "We are circumcised, so the condom must be circumcised." But Population Services International reports that its condom sales in South Africa are up twenty-two per cent this year. The Namibian State H.I.V. program has recently requested seventeen of the cartoons, and broadcast arrangements are in the works with some twenty other nations.

Currently, the Amigos speak English, Zulu, Sotho, and Afrikaans, and plan to learn forty-one more languages by July. Quinn and Kharas have set an ambitious goal of introducing Shaft, Dick, and Stretch to a hundred countries and a billion people within the next three years. Eventually, Quinn hopes to create a supplementary newspaper comic strip. "I don't think there's a shortage of storylines about sexuality and risk-taking," he said. "Dysfunctional male attitudes are quite perennial."

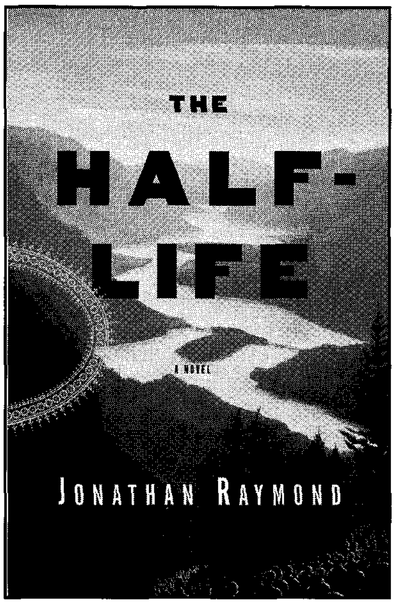
The Amigos have already débuted in North America: on World AIDS Day, last December 1st, MTV Canada aired three of the segments a total of thirty-seven times. ("You know what Canadians are like—they have a predilection for doing good," Quinn said.) Of the various groups Quinn and Kharas met with during their visit here, the State Department was the only one that was unenthusiastic. "Their priority is more A and B: abstinence and be faithful," Quinn said.

Still, preliminary casting plans for the American voices are under way. "We're talking to some top guys in Hollywood," Quinn said. He'd like to hear Chris Rock as Shaft, and Benicio Del Toro as Stretch. Dick, it turns out, is based on The Dude, a character from the film "The Big Lebowski," as played by Jeff Bridges. For Femidom, Quinn suggested J. Lo.

Quinn has considered adding an episode about abstinence, anyway. "Cartoon condoms talking about abstinence," he said. "How funny is that?"

—*Ben McGrath*

“A marvelous debut novel.”—*Vanity Fair*



“Jonathan Raymond is a marvel; *The Half-Life* is both extraordinarily beautiful and impossible to put down. Wise to the crossed wires of history, to the urgencies of friendship and love, Raymond’s novel is not to be missed.”
—ANDREW SEAN GREER, AUTHOR OF *The Confessions of Max Tivoli*

“In Jonathan Raymond’s restless, questing novel, landscape isn’t mere backdrop but a trove of deep secrets; you may never feel the same way again about the ground beneath your feet.”
—SUSAN CHOI, AUTHOR OF *American Woman*

“A hugely engrossing excavation of history and friendship, *The Half-Life* is a debut novel of astounding perception and breadth.”
—TODD HAYNES, DIRECTOR, *Far From Heaven*

“With *The Half-Life* Jonathan Raymond has achieved a remarkable debut—a novel of great accomplishment and lyric dimensions...most strongly recommended.”
—JEFFREY LENT, AUTHOR OF *In the Fall* and *Lost Nation*

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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

THE GRAY ZONE

How a secret Pentagon program came to Abu Ghraib.

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

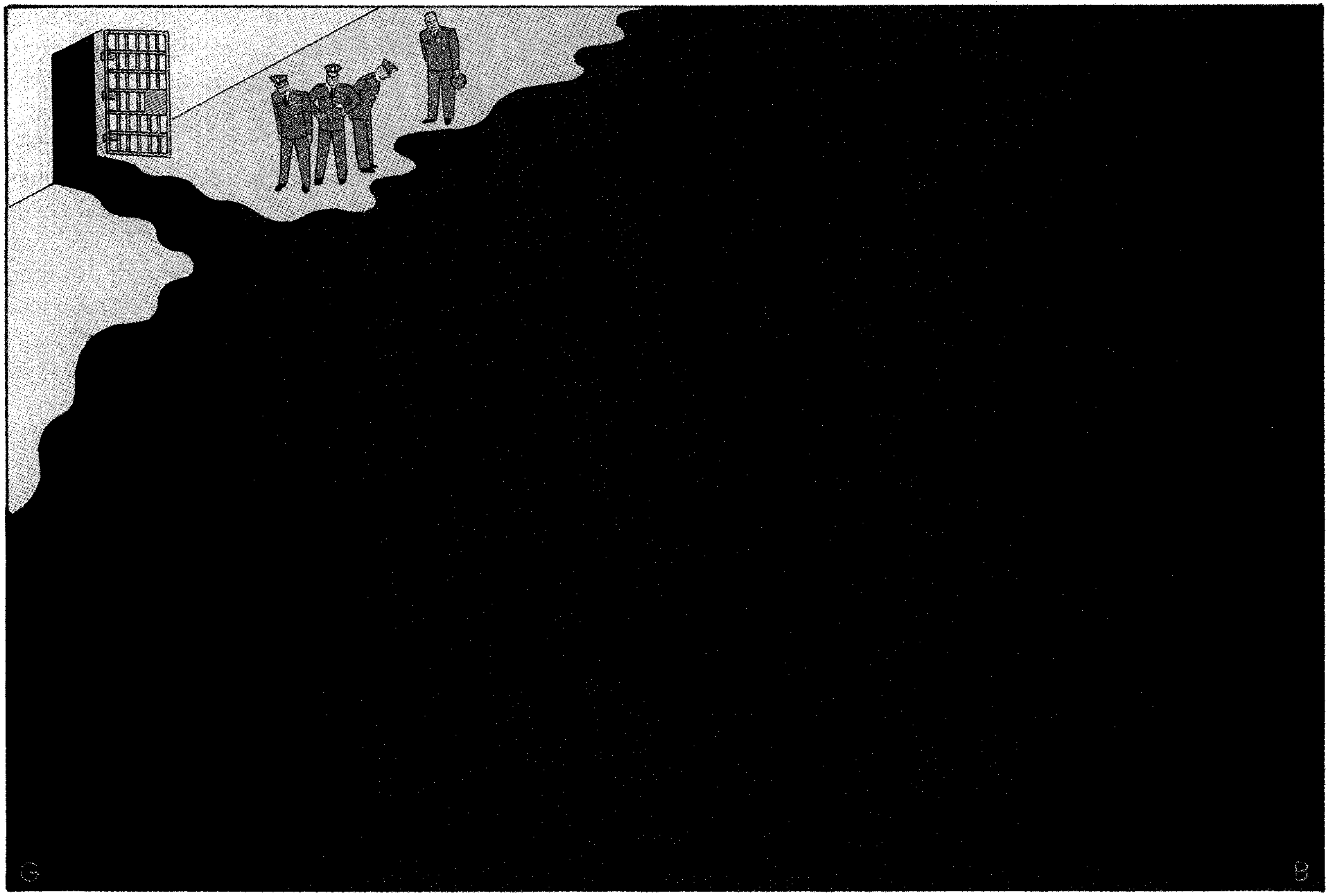
The roots of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal lie not in the criminal inclinations of a few Army reservists but in a decision, approved last year by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, to expand a highly secret operation, which had been focussed on the hunt for Al Qaeda, to the interrogation of prisoners in Iraq. Rumsfeld’s decision embittered the American intelligence community, damaged the effectiveness of élite combat units, and hurt America’s prospects in the war on terror.

According to interviews with several past and present American intelligence officials, the Pentagon’s operation, known inside the intelligence community by several code words, including Copper Green, encouraged physical coercion and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners in an effort to generate more intelligence about the growing insurgency in Iraq. A senior C.I.A. official, in confirming the details of this account last week, said that the operation stemmed from Rumsfeld’s long-standing desire to wrest control of America’s clandestine and paramilitary operations from the C.I.A.

Rumsfeld, during appearances last week before Congress to testify about Abu Ghraib, was precluded by law from explicitly mentioning highly secret matters in an unclassified session. But he conveyed the message that he was telling the public all that he knew about the story. He said, “Any suggestion that there is not a full, deep awareness of what has happened, and the damage it has done, I think, would be a misunderstanding.” The senior C.I.A. official, asked about Rumsfeld’s testimony and that of Stephen Cambone, his Under-Secretary for Intelligence, said, “Some people think you can bullshit anyone.”

The Abu Ghraib story began, in a sense, just weeks after the September 11, 2001, attacks, with the American bombing of Afghanistan. Almost from the start, the Administration’s search for Al Qaeda members in the war zone, and its worldwide search for terrorists, came up against major command-and-control problems. For example, combat forces that had Al Qaeda targets in sight had to obtain legal clearance before firing on them. On October 7th, the night the bombing began, an unmanned Predator aircraft tracked an automobile convoy that, American intelligence believed, contained Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban leader. A lawyer on duty at the United States Central Command headquarters, in Tampa, Florida, refused to authorize a strike. By the time an attack was approved, the target was out of reach. Rumsfeld was apoplectic over what he saw as a self-defeating hesitation to attack that was due to political correctness. One officer described him to me that fall as “kicking a lot of glass and breaking doors.” In November, the Washington *Post* reported that, as many as ten times since early October, Air Force pilots believed they’d had senior Al Qaeda and Taliban members in their sights but had been unable to act in time because of legalistic hurdles. There were similar problems throughout the world, as American Special Forces units seeking to move quickly against suspected terrorist cells were compelled to get prior approval from local American ambassadors and brief their superiors in the chain of command.

Rumsfeld reacted in his usual direct fashion: he authorized the establishment of a highly secret program that was given blanket advance approval to kill or capture and, if possible, interrogate “high value” targets in the Bush Administration’s war on terror. A special-access program, or SAP—subject to the Defense Department’s most stringent level of security—was set up, with an office in a secure area of the Pentagon. The program would recruit operatives and acquire the necessary equipment, including aircraft, and would keep its activities under wraps. America’s most successful intelligence operations during the Cold War had been SAPs, including the Navy’s submarine penetration of underwater cables used by the Soviet high command and construction of the Air Force's stealth bomber. All the so-called "black" programs had one element in common: the Secretary of Defense, or his deputy, had to conclude that the normal military classification restraints did not provide enough security.



"Since 9/11, we've changed the rules," a Pentagon consultant said, "and created conditions where the ends justify the means."

GUY BILLOUT

"Rumsfeld's goal was to get a capability in place to take on a high-value target—a standup group to hit quickly," a former high-level intelligence official told me. "He got all the agencies together—the C.I.A. and the N.S.A.—to get pre-approval in place. Just say the code word and go." The operation had across-the-board approval from Rumsfeld and from Condoleezza Rice, the national-security adviser. President Bush was informed of the existence of the program, the former intelligence official said.

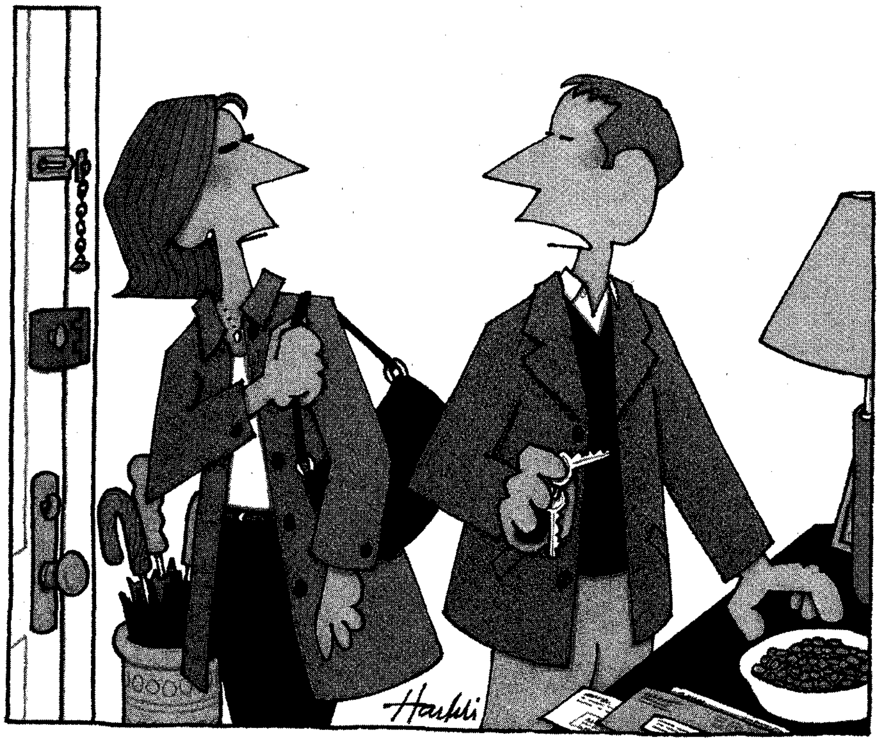
The people assigned to the program worked by the book, the former intelligence official told me. They created code words, and recruited, after careful screening, highly trained commandos and operatives from America's élite forces—Navy SEALs, the Army's Delta Force, and the C.I.A.'s paramilitary experts. They also asked some basic questions: "Do the people working the problem have to use aliases? Yes. Do we need dead drops for the mail? Yes. No traceability and no budget. And some special-access programs are never fully briefed to Congress."

In theory, the operation enabled the Bush Administration to respond immediately to time-sensitive intelligence: commandos crossed borders without visas and could interrogate terrorism suspects deemed too important for transfer to the military's facilities at Guantánamo, Cuba. They carried out instant interrogations—using force if necessary—at secret C.I.A. detention centers scattered around the world. The intelligence would be relayed to the SAP command center in the Pentagon in real time, and sifted for those pieces of information critical to the "white," or overt, world.

Fewer than two hundred operatives and officials, including Rumsfeld and General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were "completely read into the program," the former intelligence official said. The goal was to keep the operation protected. "We're not going to read more people than necessary into our heart of darkness," he said. "The rules are 'Grab whom you must. Do what you want.' "

One Pentagon official who was deeply involved in the program was Stephen Cambone, who was named Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence in March, 2003. The office was new; it was created as part of Rumsfeld's reorganization of the Pentagon. Cambone was unpopular among military and civilian intelligence bureaucrats in the Pentagon, essentially because he had little experience in running intelligence programs, though in 1998 he had served as staff director for a committee, headed by Rumsfeld, that warned of an emerging ballistic-missile threat to the United States. He was known instead for his closeness to Rumsfeld. "Remember Henry II—'Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest?' " the senior C.I.A. official said to me, with a laugh, last week. "Whatever Rumsfeld whimsically says, Cambone will do ten times that much."

Cambone was a strong advocate for



"Will we be going anyplace where pennies might be of use?"

war against Iraq. He shared Rumsfeld's disdain for the analysis and assessments proffered by the C.I.A., viewing them as too cautious, and chafed, as did Rumsfeld, at the C.I.A.'s inability, before the Iraq war, to state conclusively that Saddam Hussein harbored weapons of mass destruction. Cambone's military assistant, Army Lieutenant General William G. (Jerry) Boykin, was also controversial. Last fall, he generated unwanted headlines after it was reported that, in a speech at an Oregon church, he equated the Muslim world with Satan.

Early in his tenure, Cambone provoked a bureaucratic battle within the Pentagon by insisting that he be given control of all special-access programs that were relevant to the war on terror. Those programs, which had been viewed by many in the Pentagon as sacrosanct, were monitored by Kenneth deGraffenreid, who had experience in counter-intelligence programs. Cambone got control, and deGraffenreid subsequently left the Pentagon. Asked for comment on this story, a Pentagon spokesman said, "I will not discuss any covert programs; however, Dr. Cambone did not assume his position as the Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence until March 7, 2003, and had no involvement in the decision-making process regarding interrogation procedures in Iraq or anywhere else."

In mid-2003, the special-access program was regarded in the Pentagon as one of the success stories of the war on terror. "It was an active program," the former intelligence official told me. "It's been the most important capability we have for dealing with an imminent threat. If we discover where Osama bin Laden is, we can get him. And we can remove an existing threat with a real capability to hit the United States—and do so without visibility." Some of its methods were troubling and could not bear close scrutiny, however.

By then, the war in Iraq had begun. The SAP was involved in some assignments in Iraq, the former official said. C.I.A. and other American Special Forces operatives secretly teamed up to hunt for Saddam Hussein and—without success—for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. But they weren't able to stop the evolving insurgency.

In the first months after the fall of Baghdad, Rumsfeld and his aides still had a limited view of the insurgency, seeing it as little more than the work of Baathist "dead-enders," criminal gangs, and foreign terrorists who were Al Qaeda followers. The Administration measured its success in the war by how many of those on its list of the fifty-five most wanted members of the old regime—reproduced on playing cards—had been captured. Then, in August, 2003, terror bombings in Baghdad hit the Jordanian Embassy, killing nineteen people, and the United Nations headquarters, killing twenty-three people, including Sergio Vieira de Mello, the head of the U.N. mission. On August 25th, less than a week after the U.N. bombing, Rumsfeld acknowledged, in a talk before the Veterans of Foreign Wars, that "the dead-enders are still with us." He went on, "There are some today who are surprised that there are still pockets of resistance in Iraq, and they suggest that this represents some sort of failure on the part of the Coalition. But this is not the case." Rumsfeld compared the insurgents with those true believers who "fought on during and after the defeat of the Nazi regime in Germany." A few weeks later—and five months after the fall of Baghdad—the Defense Secretary declared, "It is, in my view, better to be dealing with terrorists in Iraq than in the United States."

Inside the Pentagon, there was a growing realization that the war was going badly. The increasingly beleaguered and baffled Army leadership was telling reporters that the insurgents consisted of five thousand Baathists loyal to Saddam Hussein. "When you understand that they're organized in a cellular structure," General John Abizaid, the head of the Central Command, declared, "that . . . they have access to a lot of money and a lot of ammunition, you'll understand how dangerous they are."

The American military and intelligence communities were having little success in penetrating the insurgency. One internal report prepared for the U.S. military, made available to me, concluded that the insurgents' "strategic and operational intelligence has proven to be quite good." According to the study:

> Their ability to attack convoys, other vulnerable targets and particular individuals has been the result of painstaking surveillance and reconnaissance. Inside information has been passed on to insurgent cells about convoy/troop movements and daily habits of Iraqis working with coalition from within the Iraqi security

> services, primarily the Iraqi Police force which is rife with sympathy for the insurgents, Iraqi ministries and from within pro-insurgent individuals working with the CPA's so-called Green Zone.

The study concluded, "Politically, the U.S. has failed to date. Insurgencies can be fixed or ameliorated by dealing with what caused them in the first place. The disaster that is the reconstruction of Iraq has been the key cause of the insurgency. There is no legitimate government, and it behooves the Coalition Provisional Authority to absorb the sad but unvarnished fact that most Iraqis do not see the Governing Council"—the Iraqi body appointed by the C.P.A.—"as the legitimate authority. Indeed, they know that the true power is the CPA."

By the fall, a military analyst told me, the extent of the Pentagon's political and military misjudgments was clear. Donald Rumsfeld's "dead-enders" now included not only Baathists but many marginal figures as well—thugs and criminals who were among the tens of thousands of prisoners freed the previous fall by Saddam as part of a prewar general amnesty. Their desperation was not driving the insurgency; it simply made them easy recruits for those who were. The analyst said, "We'd killed and captured guys who had been given two or three hundred dollars to 'pray and spray' "—that is, shoot randomly and hope for the best. "They weren't really insurgents but down-and-outers who were paid by wealthy individuals sympathetic to the insurgency." In many cases, the paymasters were Sunnis who had been members of the Baath Party. The analyst said that the insurgents "spent three or four months figuring out how we operated and developing their own countermeasures. If that meant putting up a hapless guy to go and attack a convoy and see how the American troops responded, they'd do it." Then, the analyst said, "the clever ones began to get in on the action."

By contrast, according to the military report, the American and Coalition forces knew little about the insurgency: "Human intelligence is poor or lacking . . . due to the dearth of competence and expertise. . . . The intelligence effort is not coördinated since either too many groups are involved in gathering intelligence or the final product does not get to the troops in the field in a timely manner." The success of the war was at risk; something had to be done to change the dynamic.

The solution, endorsed by Rumsfeld and carried out by Stephen Cambone, was to get tough with those Iraqis in the Army prison system who were suspected of being insurgents. A key player was Major General Geoffrey Miller, the commander of the detention and interrogation center at Guantánamo, who had been summoned to Baghdad in late August to review prison interrogation procedures. The internal Army report on the abuse charges, written by Major General Antonio Taguba in February, revealed that Miller urged that the commanders in Baghdad change policy and place military intelligence in charge of the prison. The report quoted Miller as recommending that "detention operations must act as an enabler for interrogation."

Miller's concept, as it emerged in recent Senate hearings, was to "Gitmoize" the prison system in Iraq—to make it more focussed on interrogation. He also briefed military commanders in Iraq on the interrogation methods used in Cuba—methods that could, with special approval, include sleep deprivation, exposure to extremes of cold and heat, and placing prisoners in "stress positions" for agonizing lengths of time. (The Bush Administration had unilaterally declared Al Qaeda and other captured members of international terrorist networks to be illegal combatants, and not eligible for the protection of the Geneva Conventions.)

Rumsfeld and Cambone went a step further, however: they expanded the scope of the SAP, bringing its unconventional methods to Abu Ghraib. The commandos were to operate in Iraq as they had in Afghanistan. The male prisoners could be treated roughly, and exposed to sexual humiliation.

"They weren't getting anything substantive from the detainees in Iraq," the former intelligence official told me. "No names. Nothing that they could hang their hat on. Cambone says, I've got to crack this thing and I'm tired of working through the normal chain of command. I've got this apparatus set up—the black special-access program—and I'm going in hot. So he pulls the switch, and the electricity begins flowing last summer. And it's working. We're getting a picture of the insurgency in Iraq and the intelligence is flowing into the white world. We're getting good stuff. But we've got more targets"—prisoners in Iraqi jails—"than people who can handle them."

Cambone then made another crucial decision, the former intelligence official told me: not only would he bring the SAP's rules into the prisons; he would bring some of the Army military-intelligence officers working inside the Iraqi prisons under the SAP's auspices. "So here are fundamentally good soldiers—military-intelligence guys—being told that no rules apply," the former official, who has extensive knowledge of the special-access programs, added. "And, as far as they're concerned, this is a covert operation, and it's to be kept within Defense Department channels."

The military-police prison guards, the former official said, included "recycled hillbillies from Cumberland, Maryland." He was referring to members of the 372nd Military Police Company. Seven members of the company are now facing charges for their role in the abuse at Abu Ghraib. "How are these guys from Cumberland going to know anything? The Army Reserve doesn't know what it's doing."

Who was in charge of Abu Ghraib—whether military police or military intelligence—was no longer the only question that mattered. Hard-core special operatives, some of them with aliases, were working in the prison. The military police assigned to guard the prisoners wore uniforms, but many others—military intelligence officers, contract interpreters, C.I.A. officers, and the men from the special-access program—wore civilian clothes. It was not clear who was who, even to Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, then the commander of the 800th Military Police Brigade, and the officer ostensibly in charge. "I thought most of the civilians there were interpreters, but there were some civilians that I didn't know," Karpinski told me. "I called them the disappearing ghosts. I'd seen them once in a while at Abu Ghraib and then I'd see them months later. They were nice—they'd always call out to me and say, 'Hey, remember me? How are you doing?' " The mysterious civilians, she said, were "always bringing in somebody for interrogation or waiting to collect somebody going out." Karpinski added that she had no idea who was operating in her prison system. (General Taguba found that Karpinski's leadership failures contributed to the abuses.)

By fall, according to the former intelligence official, the senior leadership of the C.I.A. had had enough. "They said, 'No way. We signed up for the core program in Afghanistan—pre-approved for operations against high-value terrorist targets—and now you want to use it for cabdrivers, brothers-in-law, and people pulled off the streets' "—the sort of prisoners who populate the Iraqi jails. "The C.I.A.'s legal people objected," and the agency ended its SAP involvement in Abu Ghraib, the former official said.

The C.I.A.'s complaints were echoed throughout the intelligence community. There was fear that the situation at Abu Ghraib would lead to the exposure of the secret SAP, and thereby bring an end to what had been, before Iraq, a valuable cover operation. "This was stupidity," a government consultant told me. "You're taking a program that was operating in the chaos of Afghanistan against Al Qaeda, a stateless terror group, and bringing it into a structured, traditional war zone. Sooner or later, the commandos would bump into the legal and moral procedures of a conventional war with an Army of a hundred and thirty-five thousand soldiers."

The former senior intelligence official blamed hubris for the Abu Ghraib disaster. "There's nothing more exhilarating for a pissant Pentagon civilian than dealing with an important national security issue without dealing with military planners, who are always worried about risk," he told me. "What could be more boring than needing the coöperation of logistical planners?" The only difficulty, the former official added, is that, "as soon as you enlarge the secret program beyond the oversight capability of experienced people, you lose control. We've never had a case where a special-access program went sour—and this goes back to the Cold War."

In a separate interview, a Pentagon consultant, who spent much of his career directly involved with special-access programs, spread the blame. "The White House subcontracted this to the Pentagon, and the Pentagon subcontracted it to Cambone," he said. "This is Cambone's deal, but Rumsfeld and Myers approved the program." When it came to the interrogation operation at Abu Ghraib, he said, Rumsfeld left the details to Cambone. Rumsfeld may not be personally culpable, the consultant added, "but he's responsible for the checks and balances. The issue is that, since 9/11, we've changed the rules on how we deal with terrorism, and created conditions where the ends justify the means."

Last week, statements made by one of the seven accused M.P.s, Specialist Jeremy Sivits, who is expected to plead guilty, were released. In them, he claimed that senior commanders in his unit would have stopped the abuse had they witnessed it. One of the questions that will be explored at any trial, however, is why a group of Army Reserve military policemen, most of them from small towns, tormented their prisoners as they did, in a manner that was especially humiliating for Iraqi men.

The notion that Arabs are particularly vulnerable to sexual humiliation became a talking point among pro-war Washington conservatives in the months before the March, 2003, invasion of Iraq. One book that was frequently cited was "The Arab Mind," a study of Arab culture and psychology, first published in 1973, by Raphael Patai, a cultural anthropologist who taught at, among other universities, Columbia and Princeton, and who died in 1996. The book includes a twenty-five-page chapter on Arabs and sex, depicting sex as a taboo vested with shame and repression. "The segregation of the sexes, the veiling of the women . . . and all the other minute rules that govern and restrict contact between men and women, have the effect of making sex a prime mental preoccupation in the Arab world," Patai wrote. Homosexual activity, "or any indication of homosexual leanings, as with all other expressions of sexuality, is never given any publicity. These are private affairs and remain in private." The Patai book, an academic told me, was "the bible of the neocons on Arab behavior." In their discussions, he said, two themes emerged—"one, that Arabs only understand force and, two, that the biggest weakness of Arabs is shame and humiliation."

The government consultant said that there may have been a serious goal, in the beginning, behind the sexual humiliation and the posed photographs. It was thought that some prisoners would do anything—including spying on their associates—to avoid dissemination of the shameful photos to family and friends. The government consultant said, "I was told that the purpose of the photographs was to create an army of informants, people you could insert back in the population." The idea was that they would be motivated by fear of exposure, and gather information about pending insurgency action, the consultant said. If so, it wasn't effective; the insurgency continued to grow.

"This shit has been brewing for months," the Pentagon consultant who has dealt with SAPs told me. "You don't keep prisoners naked in their cell and then let them get bitten by dogs. This is sick." The consultant explained that he and his colleagues, all of whom had served for years on active duty in the military, had been appalled by the misuse of Army guard dogs inside Abu Ghraib. "We don't raise kids to do things like that. When you go after Mullah Omar, that's one thing. But when you give the authority to kids who don't know the rules, that's another."

In 2003, Rumsfeld's apparent disregard for the requirements of the Geneva Conventions while carrying out the war on terror had led a group of senior military legal officers from the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps to pay two surprise visits within five months to Scott Horton, who was then chairman of the New York City Bar Association's Committee on International Human Rights. "They wanted us to challenge the Bush Administration about its standards for detentions and interrogation," Horton told me. "They were urging us to get involved and speak in a very loud voice. It came pretty much out of the blue. The message was that conditions are ripe for abuse, and it's going to occur." The military officials were most alarmed about the growing use of civilian contractors in the interrogation process, Horton recalled. "They said there was an atmosphere of legal ambiguity being created as a result of a policy decision at the highest levels in the Pentagon. The JAG officers were being cut out of the policy formulation process." They told him that, with the war on terror, a fifty-year history of exemplary application of the Geneva Conventions had come to an end.

The abuses at Abu Ghraib were exposed on January 13th, when Joseph Darby, a young military policeman assigned to Abu Ghraib, reported the wrongdoing to the Army's Criminal Investigations Division. He also turned over a CD full of photographs. Within three days, a report made its way to Donald Rumsfeld, who informed President Bush.

The inquiry presented a dilemma for the Pentagon. The C.I.D. had to be allowed to continue, the former intelligence official said. "You can't cover it up. You have to prosecute these guys for being off the reservation. But how do you prosecute them when they were covered by the special-access program? So you hope that maybe it'll go away." The Pentagon's attitude last January, he said, was "Somebody got caught with some photos. What's the big deal? Take care of it." Rumsfeld's explanation to the White House, the official added, was reassuring: " 'We've got a glitch in the program. We'll prosecute it.' The cover story was that some kids got out of control."

In their testimony before Congress last week, Rumsfeld and Cambone struggled to convince the legislators that Miller's visit to Baghdad in late August had nothing to do with the subsequent abuse. Cambone sought to assure the Senate Armed Services Committee that the interplay between Miller and Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, had only a casual connection to his office. Miller's recommendations, Cambone said, were made to Sanchez. His own role, he said, was mainly to insure that the "flow of intelligence back to the commands" was "efficient and effective." He added that Miller's goal was "to provide a safe, secure and humane environment that supports the expeditious collection of intelligence."

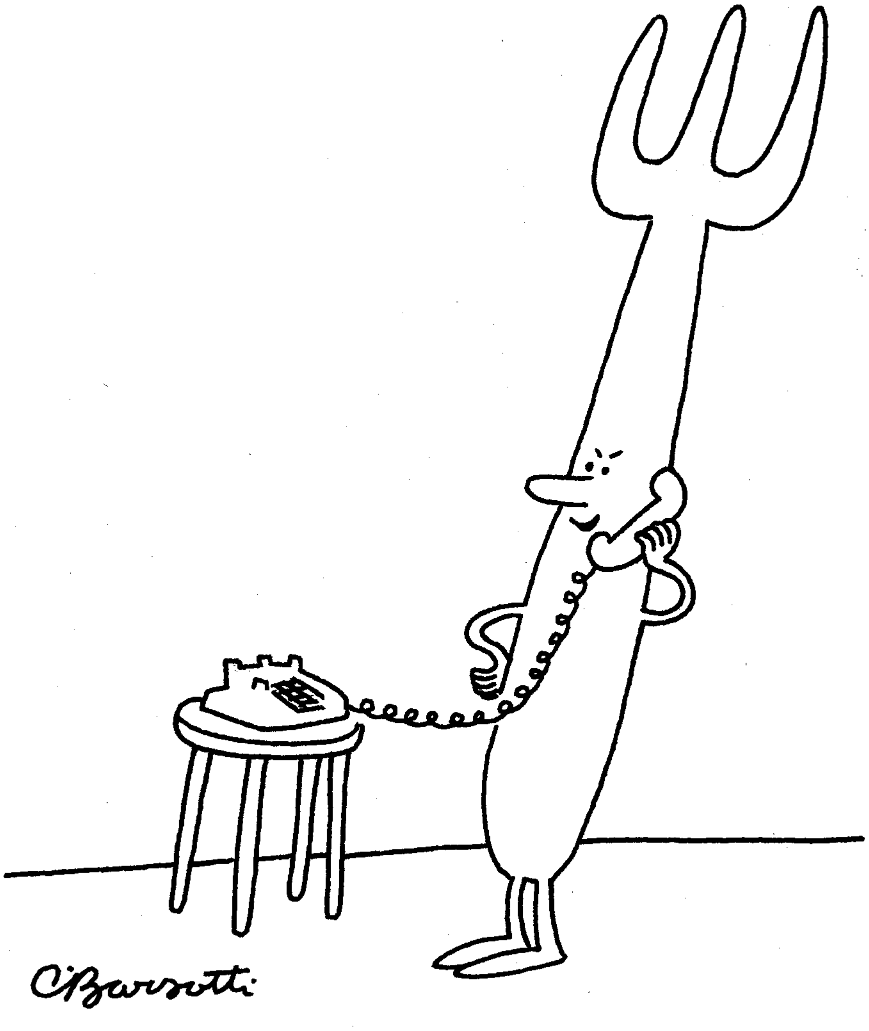
It was a hard sell. Senator Hillary Clinton, Democrat of New York, posed the essential question facing the senators:

> If, indeed, General Miller was sent from Guantánamo to Iraq for the purpose of acquiring more actionable intelligence from detainees, then it is fair to conclude that the actions that are at point here in your report [on abuses at Abu Ghraib] are in some way connected to General Miller's arrival and his specific orders, however they were interpreted, by those MPs and the military intelligence that were involved....Therefore, I for one don't believe I yet have adequate information from Mr. Cambone and the Defense Department as to exactly what General Miller's orders were . . . how he carried out those orders, and the connection between his arrival in the fall of '03 and the intensity of the abuses that occurred afterward.

Sometime before the Abu Ghraib abuses became public, the former intelligence official told me, Miller was "read in"—that is, briefed—on the special-access operation. In April, Miller returned to Baghdad to assume control of the Iraqi prisons; once the scandal hit, with its glaring headlines, General Sanchez presented him to the American and international media as the general who would clean up the Iraqi prison system and instill respect for the Geneva Conventions. "His job is to save what he can," the former official said. "He's there to protect the program while limiting any loss of core capability." As for Antonio Taguba, the former intelligence official added, "He goes into it not knowing shit. And then: 'Holy cow! What's going on?' "

If General Miller had been summoned by Congress to testify, he, like Rumsfeld and Cambone, would not have been able to mention the special-access program. "If you give away the fact that a special-access program exists," the former intelligence official told me, "you blow the whole quick-reaction program."

One puzzling aspect of Rumsfeld's account of his initial reaction to news of the Abu Ghraib investigation was his lack of alarm and lack of curiosity. One factor may have been recent history: there had been many previous complaints of prisoner abuse from organization like Human Rights Watch and the International Red Cross, and the Pentagon had weathered them with ease. Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he had not been provided with details of alleged abuses until late March, when he read the specific charges. "You read it, as I say, it's one



"Well, we gave up on those chopsticks pretty quickly didn't we?"

thing. You see these photographs and it's just unbelievable. . . . It wasn't three-dimensional. It wasn't video. It wasn't color. It was quite a different thing." The former intelligence official said that, in his view, Rumsfeld and other senior Pentagon officials had not studied the photographs because "they thought what was in there was permitted under the rules of engagement," as applied to the SAP. "The photos," he added, "turned out to be the result of the program run amok."

The former intelligence official made it clear that he was not alleging that Rumsfeld or General Myers knew that atrocities were committed. But, he said, "it was their permission granted to do the SAP, generically, and there was enough ambiguity, which permitted the abuses."

This official went on, "The black guys"—those in the Pentagon's secret program—"say we've got to accept the prosecution. They're vaccinated from the reality." The SAP is still active, and "the United States is picking up guys for interrogation. The question is, how do they protect the quick-reaction force without blowing its cover?" The program was protected by the fact that no one on the outside was allowed to know of its existence. "If you even give a hint that you're aware of a black program that you're not read into, you lose your clearances," the former official said. "Nobody will talk. So the only people left to prosecute are those who are undefended—the poor kids at the end of the food chain."

The most vulnerable senior official is Cambone. "The Pentagon is trying now to protect Cambone, and doesn't know how to do it," the former intelligence official said.

Last week, the government consultant, who has close ties to many conservatives, defended the Administration's continued secrecy about the special-access program in Abu Ghraib. "Why keep it black?" the consultant asked. "Because the process is unpleasant. It's like making sausage—you like the result but you don't want to know how it was made. Also, you don't want the Iraqi public, and the Arab world, to know. Remember, we went to Iraq to democratize the Middle East. The last thing you want to do is let the Arab world know how you treat Arab males in prison."

The former intelligence official told me he feared that one of the disastrous effects of the prison-abuse scandal would be the undermining of legitimate operations in the war on terror, which had already suffered from the draining of resources into Iraq. He portrayed Abu Ghraib as "a tumor" on the war on terror. He said, "As long as it's benign and contained, the Pentagon can deal with the photo crisis without jeopardizing the secret program. As soon as it begins to grow, with nobody to diagnose it—it becomes a malignant tumor."

The Pentagon consultant made a similar point. Cambone and his superiors, the consultant said, "created the conditions that allowed transgressions to take place. And now we're going to end up with another Church Commission"—the 1975 Senate committee on intelligence, headed by Senator Frank Church, of Idaho, which investigated C.I.A. abuses during the previous two decades. Abu Ghraib had sent the message that the Pentagon leadership was unable to handle its discretionary power. "When the shit hits the fan, as it did on 9/11, how do you push the pedal?" the consultant asked. "You do it selectively and with intelligence."

"Congress is going to get to the bottom of this," the Pentagon consultant said. "You have to demonstrate that there are checks and balances in the system." He added, "When you live in a world of gray zones, you have to have very clear red lines."

Senator John McCain, of Arizona, said, "If this is true, it certainly increases the dimension of this issue and deserves significant scrutiny. I will do all possible to get to the bottom of this, and all other allegations."

"In an odd way," Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, said, "the sexual abuses at Abu Ghraib have become a diversion for the prisoner abuse and the violation of the Geneva Conventions that is authorized." Since September 11th, Roth added, the military has systematically used third-degree techniques around the world on detainees. "Some JAGs hate this and are horrified that the tolerance of mistreatment will come back and haunt us in the next war," Roth told me. "We're giving the world a ready-made excuse to ignore the Geneva Conventions. Rumsfeld has lowered the bar." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

NO. PLEASE, NO

BY IAN FRAZIER

It happened a few months ago. I wanted to tell you about it at the time, but somehow I couldn't. I guess I needed to process it myself. I still haven't completely come to terms with it, but at least now I can talk about it. I know I was not straightforward with you, and I should have been. Forgive me.

This isn't going to be easy. There's no good way to say it, so:

Tom Ford has left Gucci.

I'm sorry. I know what hearing this does to you. He has left Gucci, Domenico has left with him, they're both gone, end of story.

It sounds so stark, a sentence that should never be said: *Tom Ford has left Gucci.* But it's all too true. Yes, I've had the same thoughts, over and over, that you're having now. Yes, the fact that his contract was not renewed is senseless and baffling and self-destructive of Gucci as a company. I wish I had more comfort to give. Sometimes things happen that we simply can't explain.

There's no rhyme or reason—I don't want to think about it, and yet somehow I can't stop. No designer knows luxury better than Tom Ford; Gucci is the most important luxury-products company in the world; and so Gucci management decides . . . to let Tom Ford *go*? Am I missing something here?

The fact remains that Tom Ford has left Gucci. I keep going over it. I can't help myself. It's like I'm numb. Tom. Ford. Has left. Gucci. I mean, everyone knew Tom Ford was *thinking* of leaving Gucci. That rumor had been around for months, or even years. But thinking of leaving and actually leaving are two different things. As the models walked down the runway at his last show, in Paris, the finality of it sank in with the spectators: "This is it. He's really leaving. Tom Ford is actually leaving Gucci." People began to sob. André Leon Talley, a giant of a man, sat there with his shoulders just heaving. It had come to this.

An instant later, people were rushing for the exits. Nobody had been able to believe it, and now that it was happening they needed to tell the community at large. A luxury-goods analyst who won't let me use her name, due to grief, had her staff stencil "Tom Ford Is Leaving Gucci" on the front of her limo, specifying that it be reversed and backward—"iccuG gnivaeL sI droF moT"—so that drivers in cars up ahead could read it and yield the road. Hazard lights flashing, she roared away into the Parisian night.

As for me, I only wanted to go off somewhere by myself and curl into a ball. Instead I ended up having a quiet dinner with friends, and we talked of other matters, trying to lift one another's spirits and pretending all the while that we weren't failing miserably.

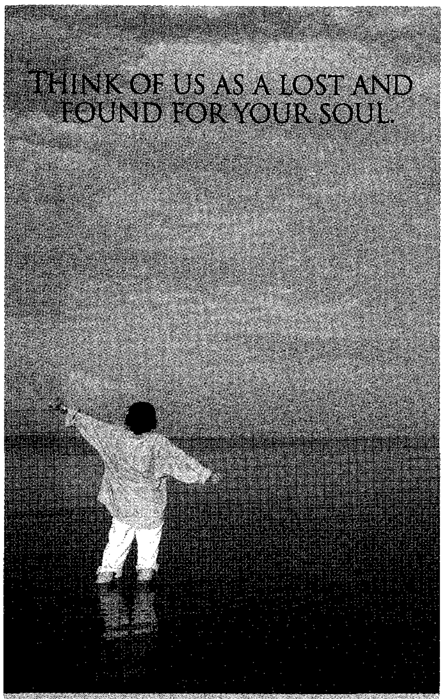
Over time, we would learn that there are seven stages a person goes through when Tom Ford leaves Gucci. The first is shock and rage. The second is also shock and rage, with rage starting to predominate. The third is pretty much all rage; I forget the stages after that, because I'm still partly in shock. During the rage period, it is quite natural to put a lot of blame on Serge Weinberg, the C.E.O. of the faceless, soulless company that owns Gucci, who indeed has much to answer for. Obviously, Serge Weinberg must be a very disturbed person to have done such a thing. But simply blaming Serge Weinberg and letting it go at that overlooks deeper and more systemic problems.

Serge Weinberg does not truly understand luxury. Tom Ford has said as much, and no one disputes that he is correct. But what does "luxury" mean? I think all of us in the luxury-products milieu know better than to try to pin it down. Putting it another way, "luxury" is a mystical awareness of luxury that a very few extraordinary individuals simply *have*. The full meaning can't be contained in a single word, which is why many initiates prefer to spell it "l*x*r*." In a practical sense, however, "luxury" may be described as the calling, or vocation, to make newer and more luxurious luxury products than the ones that have previously been made. This is what Tom Ford, above all others, has repeatedly proved he can do.

But how to convey that persuasively to someone like Serge Weinberg? (And I'm not singling him out here; O.K., I am, but he's a part of the larger non-luxury-sensitive corporate culture.) How to get through to the kind of people who can't comprehend, and never will, what makes a luxury pair of sunglasses "luxury"? Or, as another example, consider this particular Gucci handbag. It is not a luxury handbag because it is hand-sewn from chic black leather with pink stripes or because it also includes a satin web and detachable shoulder chain. No—what makes it a real luxury handbag is the full-size enamelled brass horsebit extending luxuriously across it from one end to the other. Would Serge Weinberg or the rest of the higher-ups at his company have thought in a million years to add that enamelled brass horsebit? One need say no more.

Strangely enough, I'm starting to feel better now. Confronting the sentence "Tom Ford has left Gucci," as I'm doing here, deprives it of some of its primal power to terrify. I repeat it out loud, in my normal voice, calmly: "Tom Ford has left Gucci." And you see? The words are spoken, yet the earth continues to turn, the sun still shines, the flowers—

Oh, hell! Who am I kidding? I try to put on a brave face and then it goes all to smash! *Why was this leaving allowed to occur?* Why did nobody stop that crazed fiend Serge Weinberg? Why didn't some courageous person at Pinault-Printemps-Redoute (Serge Weinberg's company) come to his or her senses and alter the fateful course before it was too late? And what about the rest of us? Why did *we* just sit idly by? Tom Ford left, irrevocably, and Domenico with him, and the rest of us did, for all intents and purposes, NOTHING. Tom Ford says he's going to Hollywood to become a filmmaker, which is fine, but again I ask the painful question: Why? What greater purpose is served by a man who understands luxury going into movies, a medium in which, frankly, any reasonably talented designer can succeed? I know I should accept what can't be changed, but I am not able to, and I refuse to. "Tom Ford has left Gucci." Make it not true. ♦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A CRITIC AT LARGE

RICHES OF EMBARRASSMENT

The comic novelist Peter De Vries was an American original.

BY JEFFREY FRANK

Peter De Vries once observed that "comedy deals with that portion of our suffering that is exempt from tragedy." Few writers have understood literary comedy as well as De Vries, and few comic novelists have had his grasp of tragedy. The determination and artistry with which he approached these subjects made him hard to categorize, which may be why, little more than a decade after his death, he is pretty much forgotten—a sad note on which to begin.

De Vries was certainly a very funny man, consistently and inventively; a number of his coinages long ago found their uncredited way into the language, among them "Nostalgia ain't what it used to be" and "Deep down, he's shallow." A half century ago, his first acknowledged novel, "The Tunnel of Love," which became a Broadway play and a movie with Doris Day and Gig Young, made him moderately famous. On the basis of that and his next novel, a suburban comedy called "Comfort Me with Apples," Kingsley Amis, in the *Times*, called De Vries "the funniest serious writer to be found either side of the Atlantic." Soon enough, reviewers were comparing him to Amis, Evelyn Waugh, Ring Lardner, and Max Beerbohm—immensely gratifying judgments and helpful publisher's blurbs, but somehow less than apt. Looking back at De Vries's work (during nearly fifty years, he wrote some two dozen novels, along with parodies, poetry, short stories, and essays), one can see more clearly that his writing was informed as much by sorrow as by wit, and by the idea, as he put it, that "the rarer human sensibility becomes, the closer it gets to the logic of insanity." And sometimes sorrow won out.

On the dust jacket of "Comfort Me with Apples" (1956) is a photograph of a smiling man with dark hair who appears to be in his mid-forties (De Vries was born in 1910), his arms crossed in a fashionable authorial pose. He's wearing a dark tie and a checked tweed jacket, with a handkerchief poking out of his breast pocket. At the lower left is a blond girl, his daughter Emily, who was then about six, looking pleased with herself, as if she had just sneaked into the picture. It's the only dust-jacket photograph of the author in the company of someone else, and what is unsettling about this familial portrait is our knowledge that four years later Emily would be dead, of leukemia.

If it is difficult to think about Peter De Vries without his puns and wisecracks, it is impossible to do so apart from this central event, or from "The Blood of the Lamb" (1961), his sixth novel, which deals with the death of a child; the descriptions of her sickness and dying are as unbearable as anything in modern literature. There were still bursts of laughter, although darker than in any other De Vries book. (At one point, the narrator's father rants, "Black light! Antimatter! It's all around us. We're all headed for it!" and adds, "The only thing that keeps me from killing myself is the will to live.") But after that his fiction had another kind of mirthfulness. He remained a master of loopy plots and malapropisms—"I've been married seventeen years and never had an organism," one character tells an advice columnist—and an observer of spoiled middle-class white America, a place populated by comfortable yet perpetually ill-at-ease heroes. But the word "humorist" no longer seemed exactly right.

I've recently immersed myself in De Vries's books, and the temptation is to stop here for a bit and start repeating De Vriesisms, the written equivalent of nudging a companion as prelude to reading something aloud: " 'Ah, Tanglewood,' I said, hunched over my plate.

'The soft summer nights, the lovers strolling, the Brahms bursting in air.' " Or " 'So you're the new personnel manager,' I said, ogling her. 'I trust you have a little opening for me.' " Then, there are the epigrams, such as "How do you expect mankind to be happy in pairs when it is miserable separately?" or "What I hate about writing is the paperwork."

In the early books, one was carried along by De Vries's unstoppable gags, his gift for spotting cant, fatuousness, and snobbery, and his grandly silly dialogue. When a woman at a party refers to a "real sou'wester," the narrator replies, "I'm from the Mi'est. . . . I went to Nor'estern." And, later, "Have you ever been to We'inster A'ey?" His best sentences were dazzling, and his ear for bad prose was infallible. In "The Tents of Wickedness" (1959), his narrator falls into parodic reveries; in a Dreiser mood, for instance, he thinks, "Now it swept over him in a rushing billow of raw emotion that caused him to thrash on his seat what he wanted to do"; and, "He had not possessed her in the orthodoxly carnal sense, only lent his flesh objectively to her special purpose." Because many of the writers parodied—John P. Marquand, for instance—are no longer much read, some of this today may seem a little puzzling. But it is hard to regard William Faulkner in quite the same way after you read about "locking her forever in that cloistral dream from which that sex who alone must waken her must by the same token be the one most powerless to deliver her."

After De Vries's daughter Emily died, his comedy took on a darker cast.

HENRY A. HAGEL

If humor is perishable—boy, is it perishable!—much of what De Vries wrote has a feeling of permanence; his antennae for absurdity and his verbal intelligence (like Nabokov, De Vries was reared listening to another language, the Dutch that his parents spoke) have outlasted the jokes. In many of his novels, he went over the territory explored by, among others, John Updike, John Cheever, and Richard Yates—marriage and sex, work and family, and all the agonies and pleasures of suburban life in the twentieth century. He wrote about admen and furniture movers, writers, clergymen, and academics. De Vries's men and women were not always perfectly drawn, but they were just as sad and baffled as, say, Cheever's Neddy and Lucinda Merrill or Yates's Frank and April Wheeler; the difference was that De Vries almost always made you laugh.

In 1964, in an interview for a series called "Counterpoint," De Vries made this autobiographical declaration:

> I was born in Chicago in 1910 into a Dutch immigrant community which still preserved its old-world ways. My origins would have been little different had my parents never come to America at all, but remained in Holland. I still feel somewhat like a foreigner, and not only for ethnic reasons. Our insularity was two-fold, being a matter of religion as well as nationality. In addition to being immigrants, and not able to mix well with the Chicago Americans around us, we were Dutch Reformed Calvinists who weren't supposed to mix—who, in fact, had considerable trouble mixing with one another. We were the elect, and the elect are barred from everything, you know, except heaven.

Peter's father hauled ice in the summer and coal in the winter and became a furniture mover; he eventually opened a warehouse business. He wanted his son to join the clergy, and sent him to Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, where he studied English and played basketball. After graduation, Peter returned to Chicago and sold candy on a vending-machine route. He worked for a small newspaper and acted on the radio, sometimes playing gangster parts and, at least once, a wounded gorilla. He also found part-time work, at twenty-five dollars a week, with the magazine *Poetry*—first as an associate editor, then as co-editor with the poet George Dillon. During the De Vries-Dillon era, the magazine published early work by, among others, Robert Lowell, John Ashbery, Randall Jarrell, James Merrill, Robert Duncan, and Karl Shapiro. (Dillon and De Vries were also among the first American editors to print poems by Dylan Thomas.) Between 1940 and 1944, De Vries also wrote three novels—"But Who Wakes the Bugler?" (illustrated by Charles Addams), "The Handsome Heart," and "Angels Can't Do Better," all of which quickly went out of print and which he later refused to list with his other books, because he decided they were "not good enough." In the fall of 1943, he married Katinka Loeser, a contributor to *Poetry*. Their courtship, according to his son Jon De Vries, probably formed the basis for the early chapters of his 1974 novel, "The Glory of the Hummingbird" (the title from the Eliot poem "Marina"), in which a young man embarrassed by his

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family commits a series of social blunders while courting a woman from Chicago's Gold Coast.

While De Vries was at *Poetry*, he wrote an admiring essay, "James Thurber: The Comic Prufrock," in which he seems to have been anticipating his future self. (In his novels, De Vries often referred to Eliot's poetry, and his characters, when the mood struck, sometimes quoted it in a Chicago dialect.) "It is hard to think of anyone who more closely resembles the Prufrock of Eliot than the middle-aged man on the flying trapeze," he wrote. "There is, for instance, the same dominating sense of Predicament. The same painful and fastidious self-inventory; the same detached anxiety; the same immersion in weary minutiae, the same self-disparagement, the same wariness of the evening's company."

Thurber, fifteen years older than De Vries, was flattered; he became a friend and promoter, and gave some of De Vries's shorter pieces to Harold Ross, the editor of *The New Yorker*. In June of 1944, Thurber wrote to De Vries, saying, "I had handed the whole sheaf of your stuff to Ross who had said, sighing, 'I'll read it, but it won't be any good.' Half hour later he called me in and said, 'Jesus Christ. It *is* good!' " A job offer followed, and, in the late summer of 1944, Peter and Katinka moved to Greenwich Village.

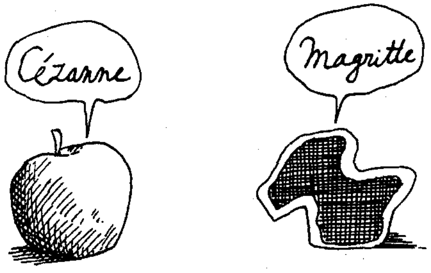
The meeting with Ross, at the Algonquin, reads like an early De Vries story, and even if it's not true, it has been repeated so often that one wants it to be. Ross, who thought that the name was French and pronounced it "DeVree," asked De Vries if he could do the Race Track department, and De Vries replied, "No, but I can imitate a wounded gorilla." To which Ross allegedly said, "Well, don't imitate it around the office. The place is a zoo the way it is."

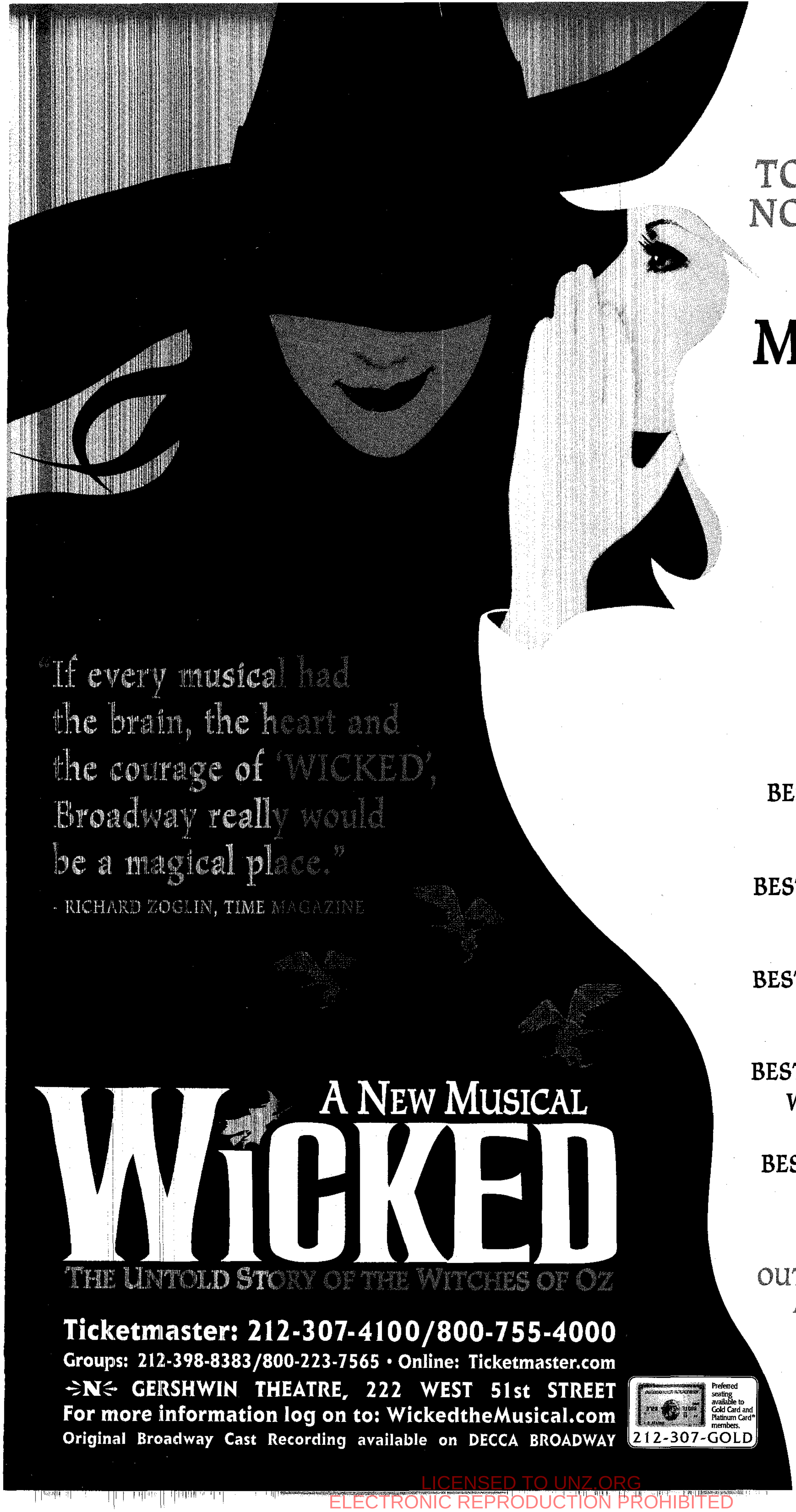
The De Vrieses eventually settled in Westport, Connecticut; among their friends and neighbors were J. D. Salinger, Robert Penn Warren, and John Hersey. De Vries became an occasional contributor of *New Yorker* "casuals" (his first signed piece appeared in May of 1946), and for more than thirty years he worked part time as a cartoon doctor, improving captions and finding gags for artists—a practice that the magazine stopped some time ago. A collection of his short pieces, "No But I Saw the Movie," came out in 1952, and two years later "The Tunnel of Love," whose harebrained plot—of imagined and real adultery and the misfortunes of a gag writer who wants to be a full-fledged cartoonist—is narrated by someone who works at a magazine much like *The New Yorker.*

It was obvious from the start that De Vries was a student of comedy. Now and then, one of his characters, speaking for the author, would pronounce on the subject: "For with what does humor deal save with that which isn't funny. Or at least isn't funny at the time: broken bones, broken machinery, bad food, hangovers. Husbands. Wives. Brats." A little later, he adds, "Tragedy and comedy have a common root, whose name at last I think I know. Desperation."

Desperation—and the abject humiliation that often accompanies it—is perhaps the central ingredient in De Vries's best books, beginning with "The Mackerel Plaza" (1958). His hero, the Reverend Andrew Mackerel, of the People's Liberal Church, is a man of wavering faith who once preached, "It is the final proof of God's omnipotence that he need not exist in order to save us." Mackerel is a widower (his wife died, possibly by foul play, in a boating accident), and he's trying to publish a book with the title "Maturity Comes of Age." As time goes by, he seems less to be in a state of mourning than in one of constant sexual longing. At one point, gazing upon a woman with whom he's acquainted, he thinks:

> She was about twenty-five, and naked except for a green skirt and sweater, heavy brown tweed coat, shoes, stockings, and so forth, a scarf knotted at her throat and a brown beret. I regarded her breasts with melancholy, then my eyes began their ordained journey downward.





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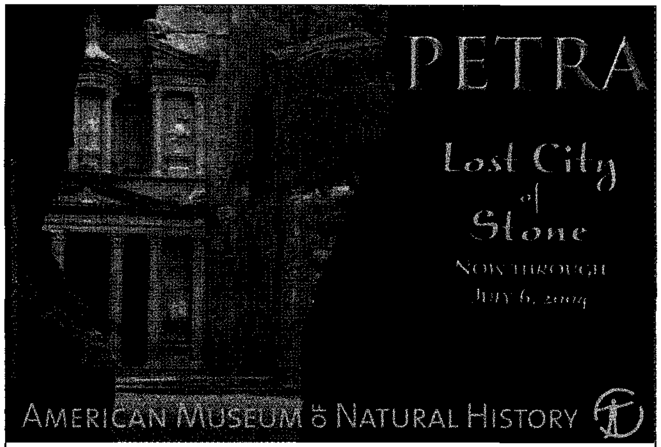
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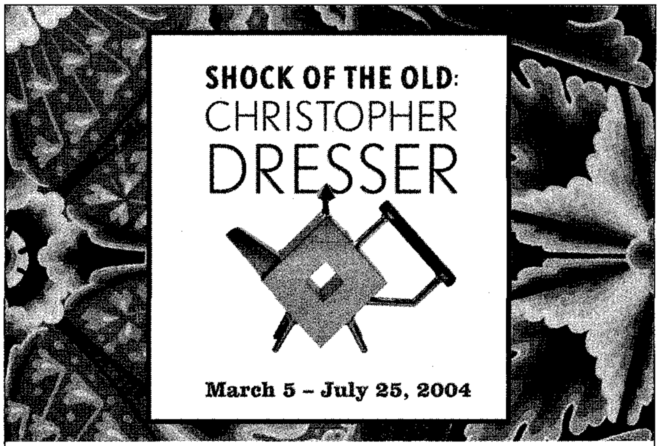
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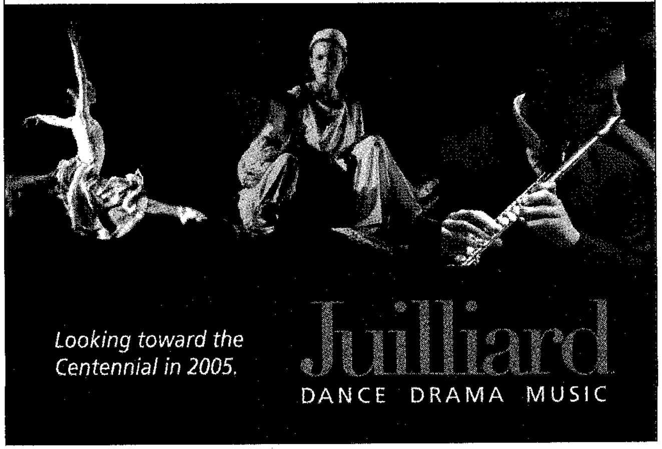
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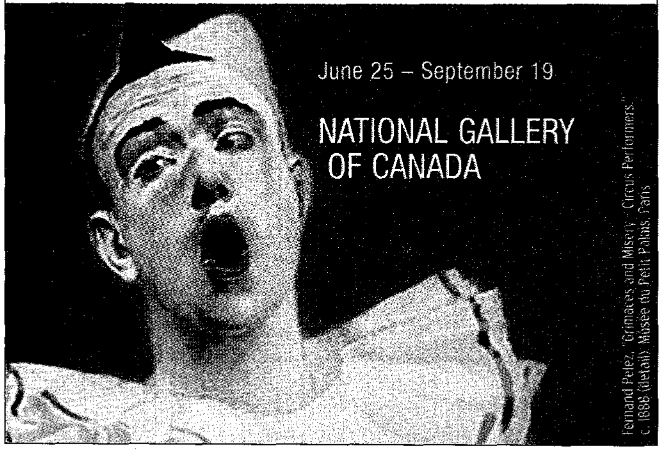

Fernand Pelez, "Grimaces and Misery - Circus Performers," c. 1888 (detail) Musée du Petit Palais, Paris

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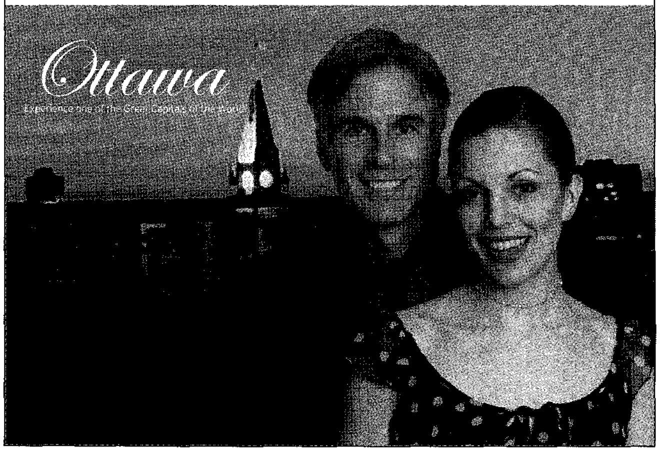
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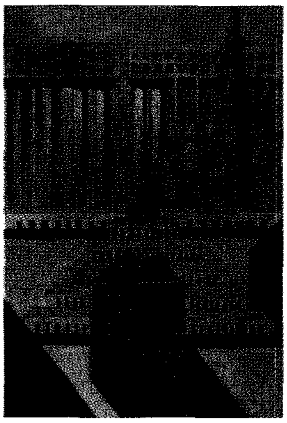

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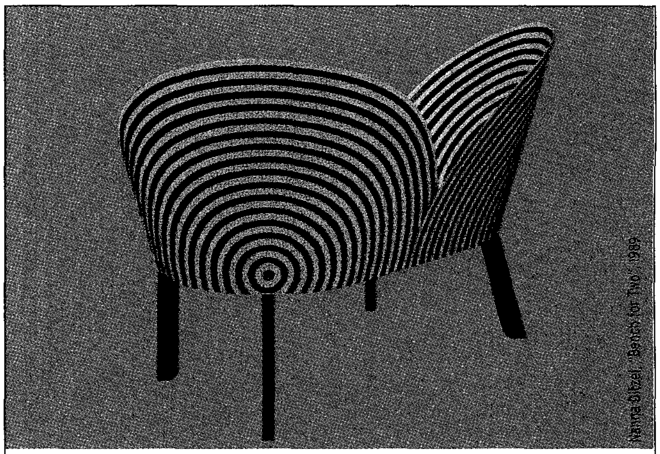

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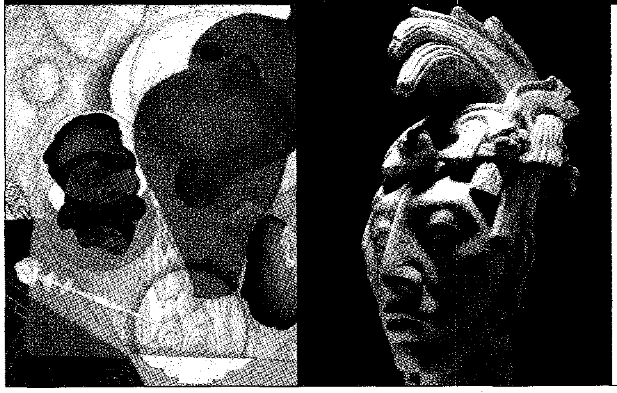

Diego Rivera, "Nature Morte Espagnole", (detail) 1915, NGA, gift of Katharine Graham
Portrait "Head of Pakal", INAH, México, photo © Michel Zabé

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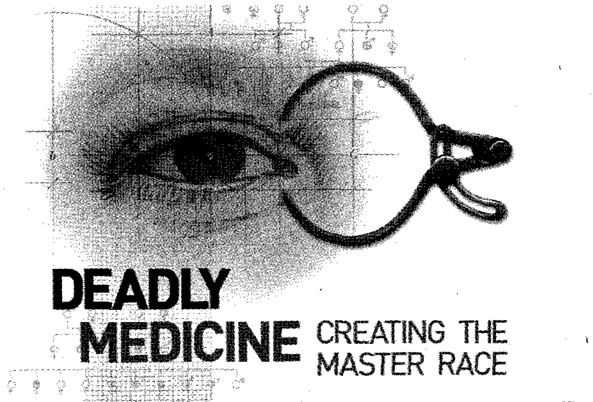

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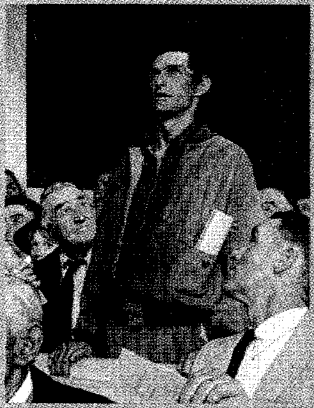

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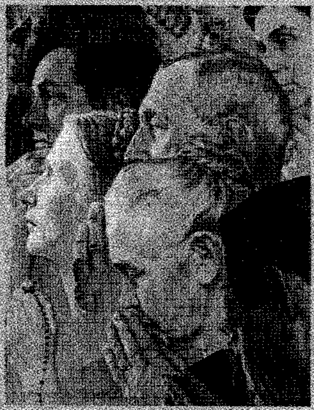

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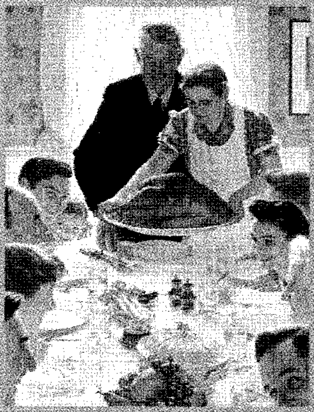

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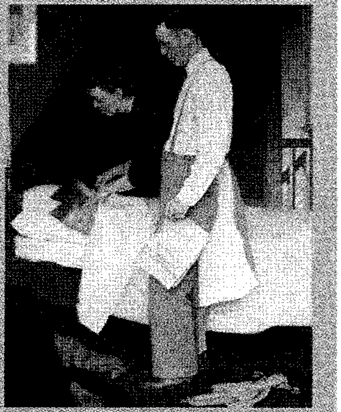

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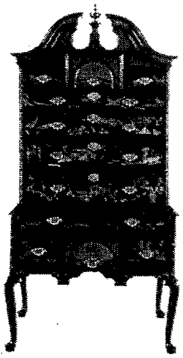
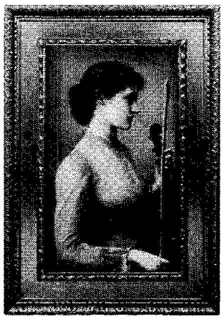
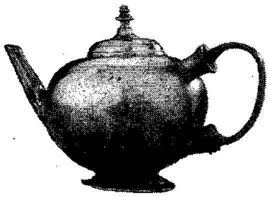
What do the objects we keep say about us?



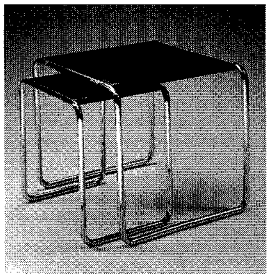
Col. Josiah Quincy loved this ca. 1735 japanned high chest of drawers, which was saved from house fires not once, but twice. It is one of the few still in existence.



Edward Burne-Jones's affection for Harvard professor Charles Eliot Norton resulted in his painting this portrait of Norton's daughter as a gift to him in 1884.



Crispus Attucks, a man of African and Native American descent who was the first to die in the Boston Massacre, owned this gnarled 1750s teapot, which was later preserved as a relic of patriotism.



Walter and Ise Gropius's interest in the marriage of design and industry is embodied in these nesting tables.

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"The Mackerel Plaza" was described by one reviewer as having "hasty characterizations and a plot that wouldn't tax the imagination of a Cub Scout Den" (the reviewer nevertheless liked the book); and it certainly depended on the conventions of the time. When Mackerel is spotted at a seedy hotel, his reputation is nearly ruined by gossips. But it is a real novel, and Mackerel is a real character, for whom things get steadily worse, as they tend to do for the protagonists of De Vries's fiction: Knopf rejects Mackerel's book; his prospective mother-in-law believes that he's a scoundrel; and he reaches a pinnacle of De Vriesian embarrassment when he's arrested for fighting with a street preacher. There's even a loss of faith, although Mackerel says, "It's not such a tragedy. Like losing a wooden leg in an accident."

"The Mackerel Plaza" was followed, the next year, by the parody-rich "Tents of Wickedness" and "Through the Fields of Clover," a disjointed and dispirited generational saga, which was dedicated "To Emily with love." By then, his daughter was mortally ill, and, in the summer of 1959, De Vries wrote to Salinger, "One trip through a children's ward and if your faith isn't shaken, you're not the type who *deserves* any faith." In what he calls a "half alcoholic screed," he went on:

> I too have moments of faith, or assurance, or beauty—or maybe just lapses in nihilism. In the morning I'm capable of hearing the music of the spheres—it's when the stars come out that I first hear the howling of eternal nothingness.

When "The Blood of the Lamb," De Vries's most autobiographical novel, was published, the year after Emily's death, it came as a shock to his readers, accustomed by now to a few hours of amusement. Like De Vries, the narrator of "The Blood of the Lamb" was raised in Chicago in a strict religious family. There was more overlap with the author's life: a stay at a sanatorium for tubercular patients, a father who went a little crazy, a sibling who died young. It was also a novel filled with the forebodings of its narrator, Don Wanderhope, about an ailing lover, about his Chicago family, and, finally, about his daughter:

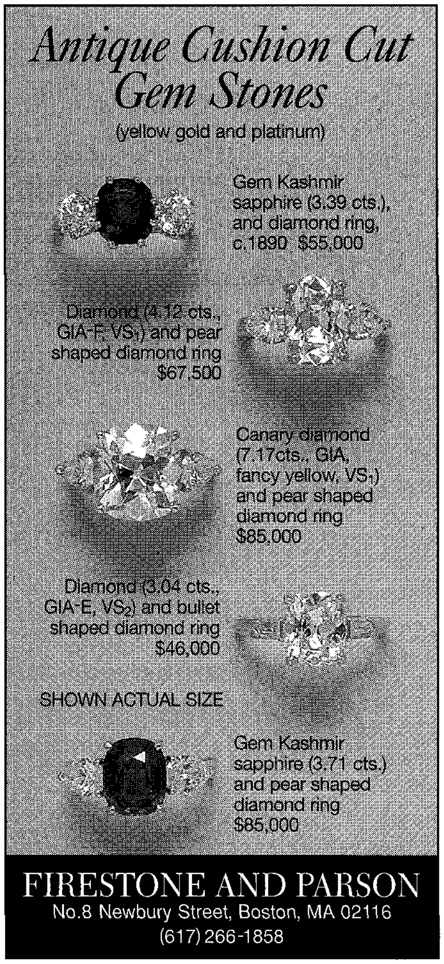
> What, I thought to myself as I gazed at [her], if anything should happen to that creature? Looking back, we seem to detect clairvoyance in certain moments of apprehension, but mine were no more than pass like a chill over the heart of any parent watching his treasure asleep in bed or taking off down the road on a bicycle.

The novel spills over with angry admonitions. Of a doctor treating his daughter, improvising chemotherapy in its infancy, Wanderhope asks, "Do you believe in God as well as play at him?" As the end draws near, he says, "So death by leukemia is now a local instead of an express. Same run, only a few more stops. But that's medicine, the art of prolonging disease."

In no other novel was De Vries so personal, although, unlike his protagonist, a widower with one dying daughter, Peter and Katinka had three other children: two surviving sons—Jon and Derek—and a daughter, Jan, who died not long ago. And in no other novel did he speak so directly to his readers: "Happiness mellows us, not troubles; pleasure, perhaps, even more than happiness. The sentimental saw belongs among those canards that include also the idea that wisdom comes with age. The old have nothing to tell us; it is more commonly we who are shouting at them, in any case."

"The Blood of the Lamb" was followed by astonishing books, astonishing in their high and low comedy and in their rich assortment of De Vries types: "Reuben, Reuben," "Let Me Count the Ways," "The Vale of Laughter," "The Cat's Pajamas," and "Witch's Milk." These novels were complex and ambitious; it was as if De Vries wanted to announce a final break from the community of American humor writers like Benchley, Perelman, and his beloved Thurber, with whom he had often been grouped.

"Reuben, Reuben," published three years after "The Blood of the Lamb," was twice as long as any earlier De Vries novel; it had three interlocking sections, the best of these narrated by a not quite literate Connecticut chicken farmer named Frank Spofford. Spofford, who has literary ambitions and reflects that the purpose of art is "to exercise the ghost of something," gave De Vries a voice to let loose on all sorts of things, such as the changes he didn't like in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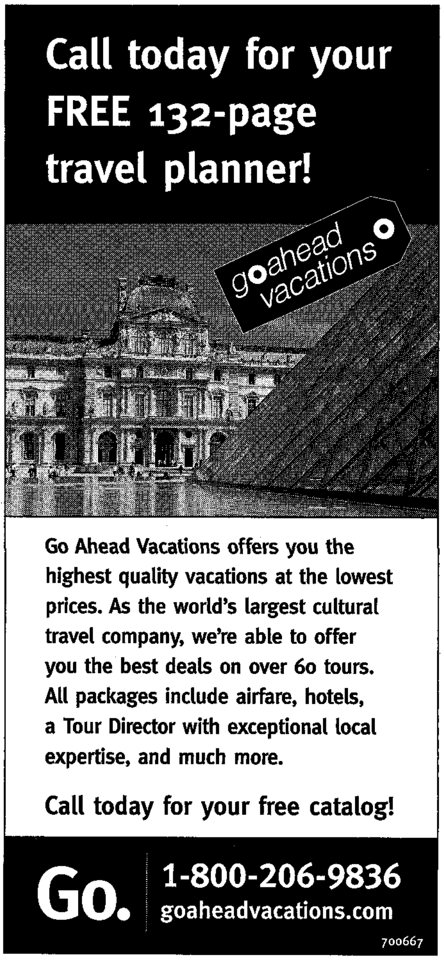
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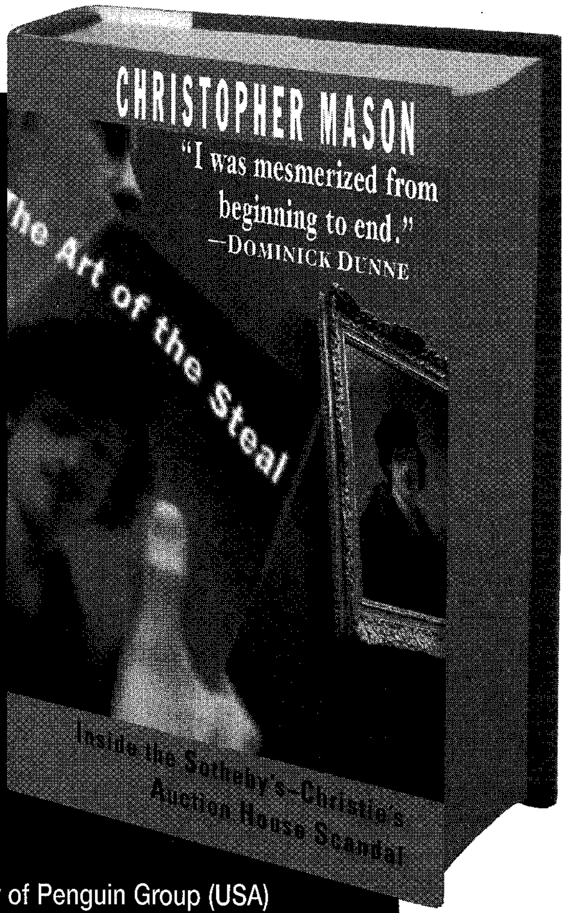
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his adopted home town, a place "filling up rapidly with ish women and sort-of men"—women who make appointments for "five-ish" and their mates. The Spoffords are the natives; they refuse to sell their chickens to commuters, especially those who drive Jaguars and live in fancy Punch Bowl Hollow; they don't bend even when one commuter's wife pleads, "My husband gets off at Stamford." After all, as a Spofford family member points out, "If you let them have any they'll only cook them in red wine." Spofford, though, becomes entranced by the social scene, by two women named Pussy, and by a Scottish poet named Gowan McGland, who is loosely based on Dylan Thomas and sounds at times a good deal like De Vries. (Swinburne's poetry, McGland says, "always reminds me of the work of some young punk who has just read Swinburne.")

Four more novels appeared in the space of just four years, and Derek De Vries recalls the sound of clacking typewriters in Westport, a "stereo effect," as his father and mother wrote at opposite ends of the house. Katinka Loeser's short stories were admired and published in several collections; her fictional account of Emily's death, "Whose Little Girl Are You?," appeared in *The New Yorker* at about the time of "The Blood of the Lamb."

De Vries would sometimes revisit favored phrases. Gowan McGland, mulling the meaning of life, mutters, "Nobody will ever figure it out. The combination is locked up inside the safe," and Stanley Waltz, in "Let Me Count the Ways" (1965), perfects the line: "The universe is like a safe to which there is a combination. But the combination is locked up in the safe." His central characters were becoming ever more hapless—Joe Sandwich, in "The Vale of Laughter" (1967), is a stockbroker with a reputation for recommending what "are known in the trade as laughing stocks"—and in 1968 he told an interviewer, "Why do we have to choose between cursing the gloom and lighting a candle? Why not a little of both?" That was the year he published "The Cat's Pajamas" and "Witch's Milk," his shortest books, bound together. Their sales disappointed Little, Brown, his publisher, which blamed their brevity, and some critics were mystified ("What do we say?" Hugh Kenner, in a somewhat mean-spirited review in the *Times,* asked). If comic, why so bleak? And, if bleak, why all the jokes? These novels were probably his masterpieces.

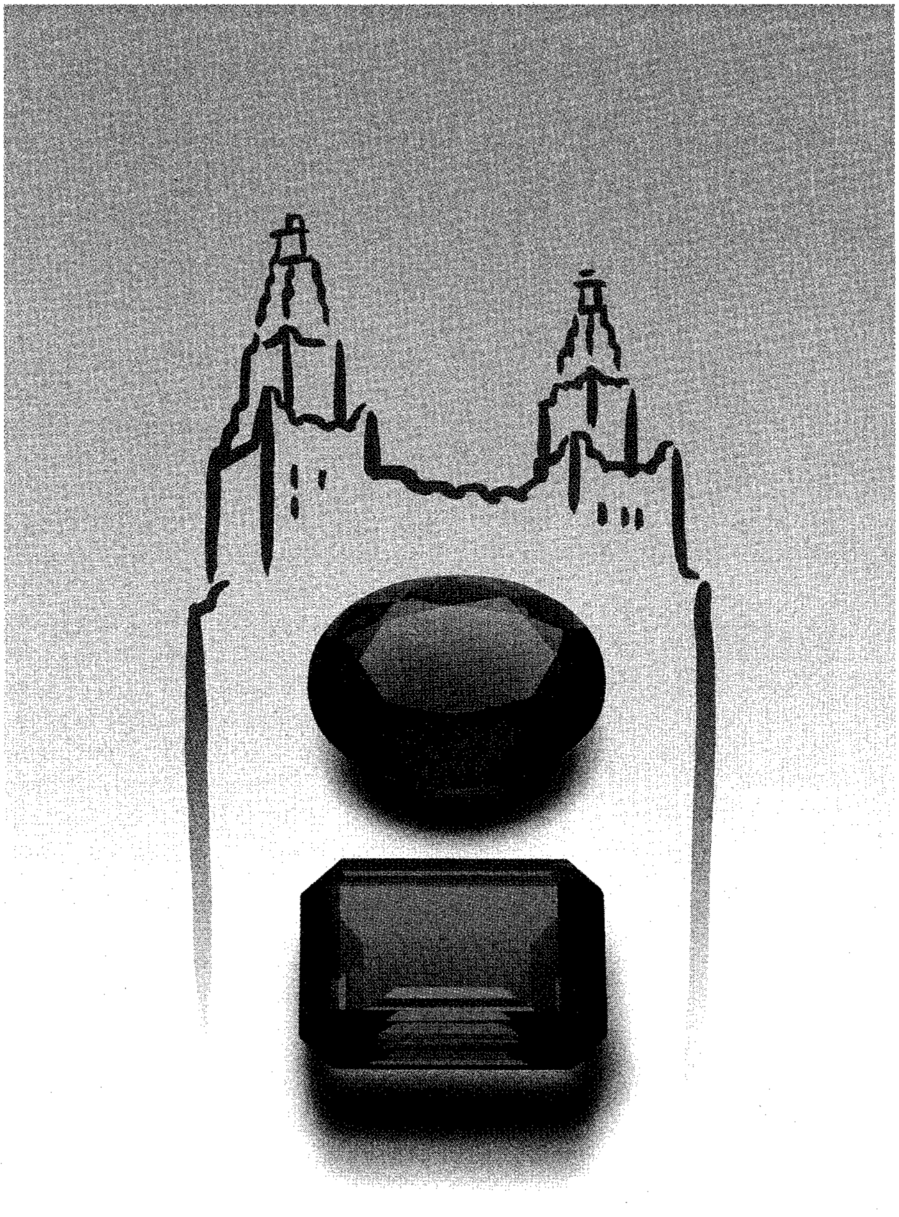
The hero of "The Cat's Pajamas," a jaded English professor, is introduced in characteristic De Vries fashion:

> Tattersall's most embarrassing moment was one for which any newspaper running such a feature would probably have paid the standard fee, but which he himself would gladly have given his life's savings to have been spared. It was the autumn Homecoming at his college, Chichester. He was attending an afternoon musicale, one of the campus events arranged for the weekend, when he became annoyed by a woman whispering behind him. He turned and glared over his shoulder at her—to find himself looking straight into the eye of an old flame.

For Hank Tattersall, the sensation was "like falling through ice into boiling water," and it gets no better. His old flame's husband is an advertising man, who tempts Tattersall to leap from academe to Madison Avenue. Tattersall's inspiration is the "commercial of the Absurd," inspired by Beckett and Ionesco: "Are you tired of detergents that don't get your wash really white? Light up a Kent." Eventually, Tattersall, well along the road to self-destruction, finds himself composing an endless commercial that asks, "Have you, along with the late Isak Dinesen, come to see man as an exquisite instrument for converting vintage claret into urine?" Toward the unnerving finale (by now the ruined Tattersall is living with an idiot child and an alcoholic dog), he briefly encounters a social worker named Tillie Shilepsky, through whom De Vries connects "The Cat's Pajamas" to "Witch's Milk."

In "Witch's Milk" (a movie version, "Pete 'n' Tillie," starred Carol Burnett and Walter Matthau), De Vries revisited almost every recurring nightmare of his earlier fiction, including the death of a child. Pete Seltzer, a skilled doubletalker who calls himself "a sonofabitch manqué," is a charming guy, but one mostly roots for Tillie, who has the misfortune of falling for him. Pete, like his creator (De Vries was called Pete by friends), is absorbed by language and its possibilities, slipping at times into Jabberwockian meditations:

> They would imagine themselves to be the first family, commissioned by the Almighty the great task of nomenclature. There were



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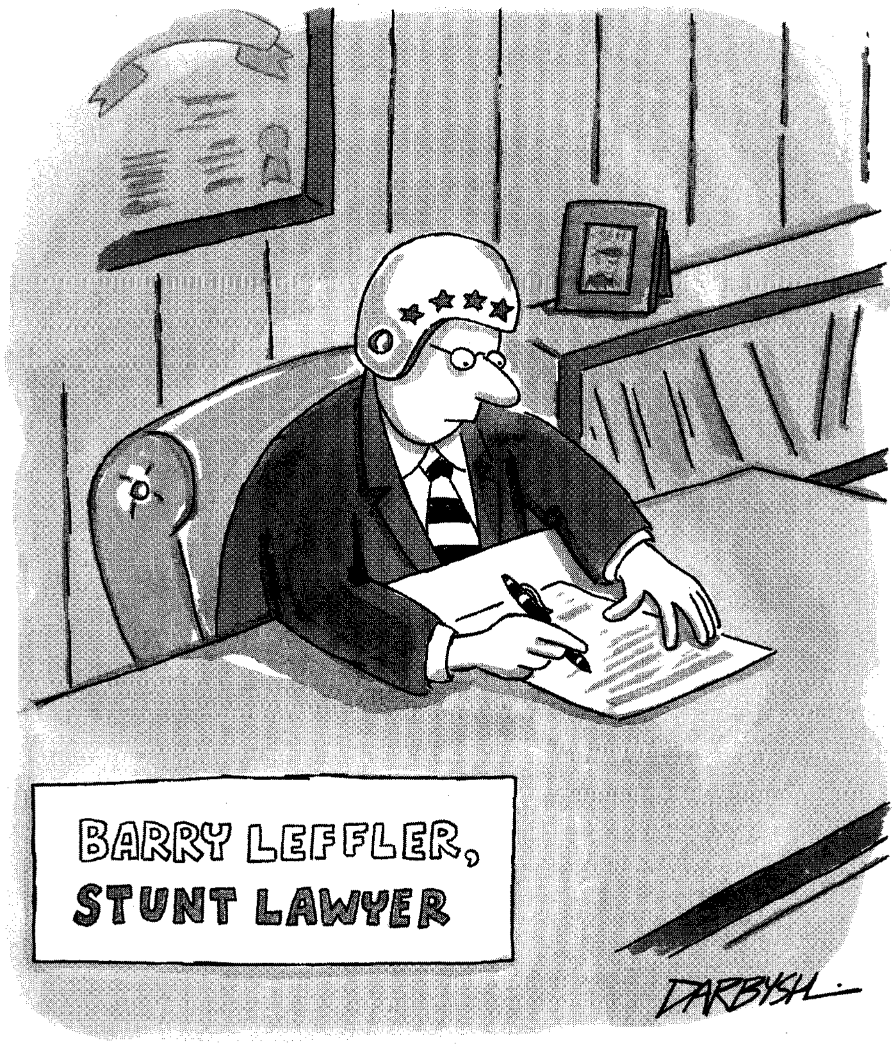
no names for anything yet, in Paradise. What would they call those things with spreading boughs? The creatures twittering among them? The beasts whose skins they wore and whose haunches they gnawed as they squatted around the first of human fires, in the semantic dawn? Their yard became full of quormels and sleeths and whappinstances, all flumping through the sweem, or manganating in the queeglestocks.

"Witch's Milk" covered an astounding range of character and emotion in just a hundred and fifteen pages—at which point Tillie is grateful to Pete for seeing her through "the disillusionments of marriage"—and in it De Vries may have reached the perfect balance of comedy and despair.

After that, De Vries's best work was behind him, although there were terrific sections in many of the dozen novels that followed—especially the first half of "The Glory of the Hummingbird." (The book was disastrously padded, at the urging of his editor at Little, Brown, who told De Vries, "Whoever heard of a novel 114 pages long? Whaddya trying to do, write 'Love Story'? . . . Is there any chance of lengthening this without destroying it?") But more often, by the late seventies, De Vries was repeating himself, and seemed less familiar with his own characters and with the world beyond Westport, which itself was no longer the same. His first-person narrators remained in many ways the children of Midwestern Calvinists, sometimes barely able to finish an adulterous liaison or even to stick with a divorce. At the same time, there was an increasing, sometimes obsessive interest in sex, though he was usually funny about it: in "Madder Music," after many episodes of athletic adultery, his unfaithful narrator confesses, "She's a great lay, but she needs an editor."

To the end, De Vries kept on being incorrect, amusing, and quotable. There are probably writers who ought to count themselves lucky that he didn't do liter-



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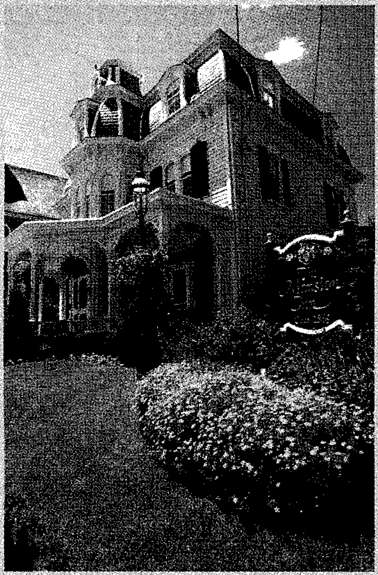

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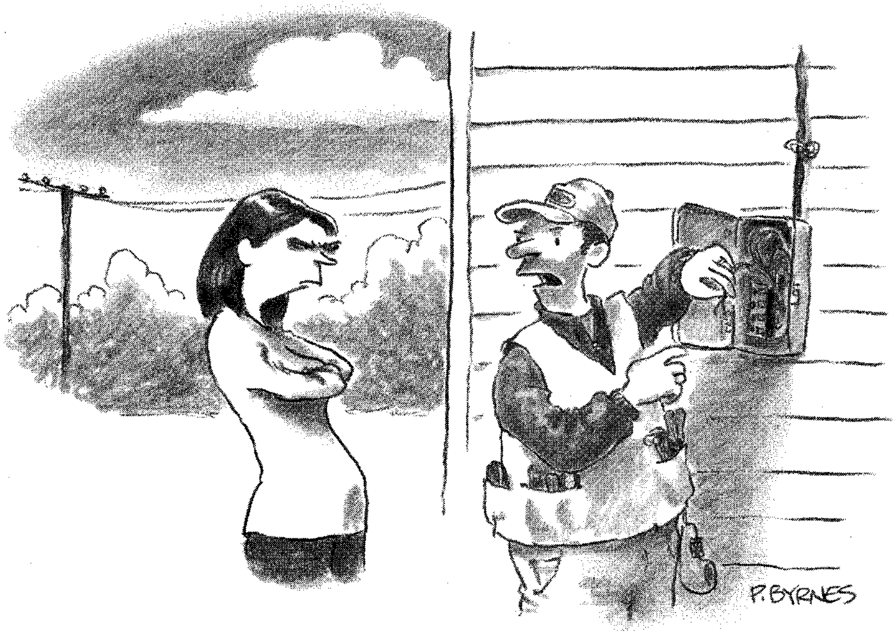

"Look, lady, we're not bad people—we're just really lousy at what we do."

• •

ary criticism—not when he could write a mock reader's report saying, "Every sentence [is] like a mother cat nursing a litter of cozily squirming subordinate clauses." But the jokes did not seem so spontaneous, and it didn't help his reputation that these later novels were often overpraised, which may have had the unintended effect of persuading new readers not to bother and encouraging older ones to wonder why they loved his work in the first place.

De Vries never had much of a public face and probably subscribed to the observation he'd made in "The Mackerel Plaza": "One dreams of the goddess Fame and winds up with the bitch Publicity." Before he began to be recognized by the residents of Westport, he would sometimes wander about and stand in front of storefronts, a blank look on his face. He was eavesdropping, according to his son Jon, picking up conversations for his fiction. He was markedly shy; he hated speaking in public and wouldn't appear on television, although he was invited by Johnny Carson. "He told me, 'Do you want me to come home in a bag?' " Jon recalled.

In the early sixties, a journalist asked De Vries for help in arranging an interview with Salinger, who by then had moved to New Hampshire and was determined to avoid all such encounters. De Vries refused and wrote back, saying, "But why do I limit my feeling to solicitude for Salinger's privacy? After other sorties than your own in recent weeks, by way of my telephone and mailbox, my mood has shifted rather to a concern for my own." He wanted the correspondent to understand the "lust for privacy of some people, and the horror of interrogation." And he recalled a line of Kafka's that Salinger had once quoted, about what "a writer himself does when encouraged to flap away: 'He begins to talk a stench.' " To a question about the "wellsprings of humor," De Vries went on, a little impatiently:

> I cannot honestly recall or retrace the conception or development of a single comedic idea I ever had or developed. They vanish from memory after they are written out. Don't ask a cow to analyze milk. One sits in a corner and secretes the stuff. One— But you see how right Kafka is? You have lured me into using the word "comedic," which makes me sick.

De Vries apparently always had a lingering sense of dread. His daughter Jan once gave him a set of oils, and he painted a tiny man surrounded by enormous dark clouds. At *The New Yorker*, where he continued to show up a couple of days a week until the early eighties, he is recalled as a tall, quiet, witty man, who usually ate lunch by himself—often at the Blue Ribbon on Forty-fourth Street, close to the magazine's former offices. Jon remembers going to clean out his father's office at about that time and finding what he called "the uniform"—a tan London Fog raincoat—hanging by the door. "It was there when I got there," his father told him.

His last novel, "Peckham's Marbles," came out in 1986, and after that he stopped publishing altogether. It was as if he knew he was saying goodbye to his readers in that novel's Gatsby-like concluding lines: "For we are all swimmers ephemerally buoyed by what will engulf us at the last; still dreaming of islands though the mainland has been lost; swept remorselessly out to sea while we spread our arms to the beautiful shore." Katinka Loeser died in 1991, and a Westport friend, Max Wilk, recalls that De Vries became something of a recluse in the two years before his death, on September 28, 1993. All his books are out of print—a gloomy fact of modern literary life.

"Nonsense is such a difficult art!" De Vries once wrote, and to contemporary readers he is in many ways a mystifying figure, perhaps because he used laughter to disguise so much while letting so much poke through—especially his feelings of desolation and his sense of foreboding. In a letter to Thurber after Emily's death, he wrote:

> Your words are of the kind that remind us that words are not necessary, that we are all side by side through all these things without it having to be said. We needn't look far for the cue to courage. When Emily no longer had any spine left she supported herself on her sternum. We can do no less. We all have to climb out of the pit of desolation, or what is more likely, manage to live in it, planting our flowers among the ashes and squirting them with our gaiety.

"The Blood of the Lamb" was dedicated to his three surviving children—"Jan, Jonny and Derek." After that, the dedication page in his novels was left blank. ♦

OUR HARD-HITTING JOURNALISTS

From the Chicago Sun-Times.

While the Philadelphia Flyers remain optimistic that center Jeremy Roenick will return this season, he reported no progress in his recovery from a severe concussion during an interview with the Philadelphia Inquirer.

IT'S AS EASY AS

one, two, three
uno, dos, tres
un, deux, trois
一、二、三
eins, zwei, drei
אחת, שתיים, שלוש
jeden, dwa, trzy
एक, दो, तीन
moja, mbili, tatu
일 , 이 , 삼
een, twee, drie
один, два, три
uno, due, tre
unus, duo, tres
يو، دوه، درې

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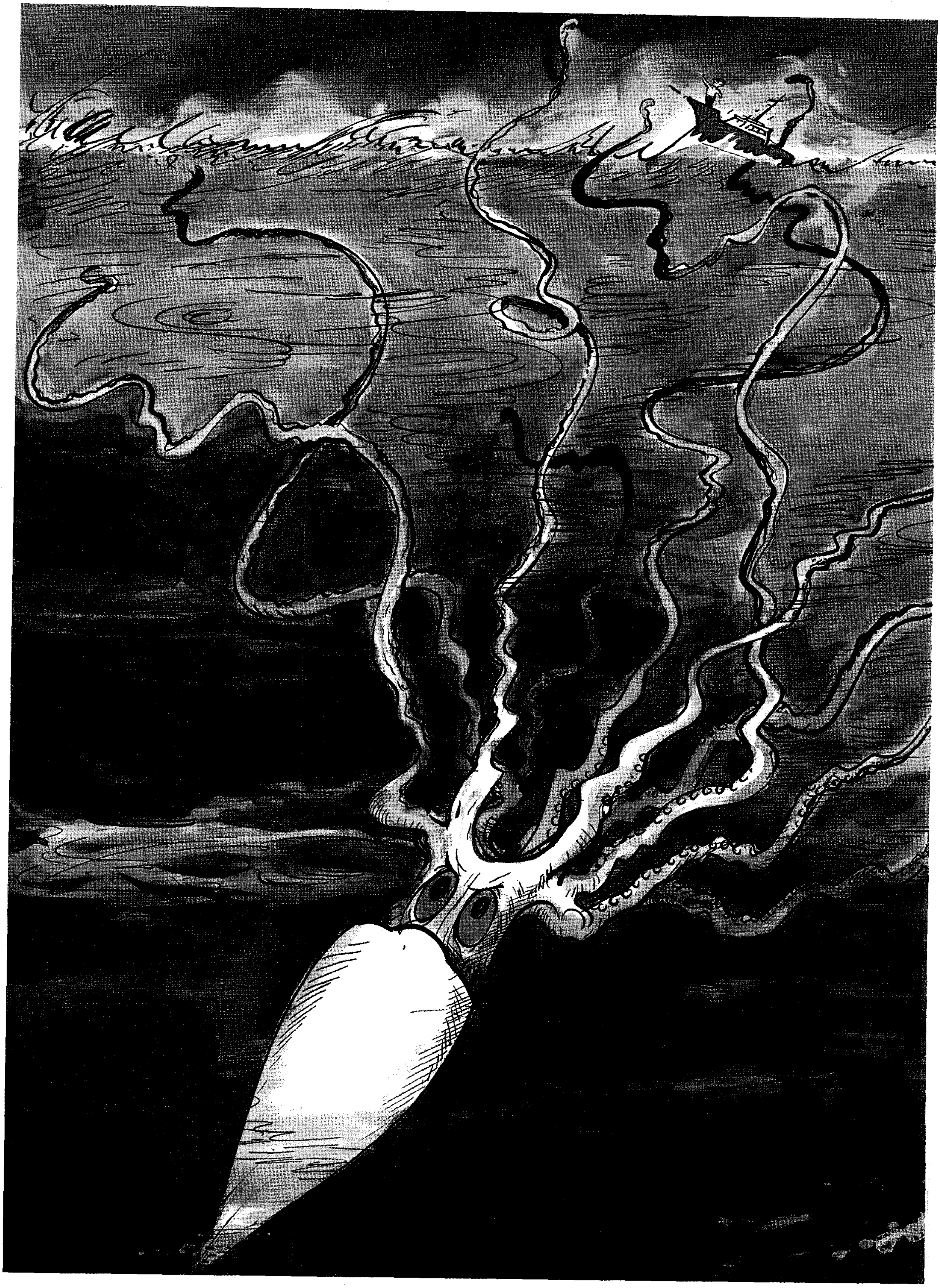


GERALD SCARFE

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE *SQUID* HUNTER

Can Steve O'Shea capture the sea's most elusive creature?

BY DAVID GRANN

On a moonless January night in 2003, Olivier de Kersauson, the French yachtsman, was racing across the Atlantic Ocean, trying to break the record for the fastest sailing voyage around the world, when his boat mysteriously came to a halt. There was no land for hundreds of miles, yet the mast rattled and the hull shuddered, as if the vessel had run aground. Kersauson turned the wheel one way, then the other; still, the gunwales shook inexplicably in the darkness. Kersauson ordered his crew, all of whom were now running up and down the deck, to investigate. Some of the crew took out spotlights and shone them on the water, as the massive trimaran—a three-hulled, hundred-and-ten-foot boat that was the largest racing machine of its kind, and was named Geronimo, for the Apache warrior—pitched in the waves.

Meanwhile, the first mate, Didier Ragot, descended from the deck into the cabin, opened a trapdoor in the floor, and peered through a porthole into the ocean, using a flashlight. He glimpsed something by the rudder. "It was bigger than a human leg," Ragot recently told me. "It was a tentacle." He looked again. "It was starting to move," he recalled.

He beckoned Kersauson, who came down and crouched over the opening. "I think it's some sort of animal," Ragot said.

Kersauson took the flashlight, and inspected for himself. "I had never seen anything like it," he told me. "There were two giant tentacles right beneath us, lashing at the rudder."

The creature seemed to be wrapping itself around the boat, which rocked violently. The floorboards creaked, and the rudder started to bend. Then, just as the stern seemed ready to snap, everything went still. "As it unhooked itself from the boat, I could see its tentacles," Ragot recalled. "The whole animal must have been nearly thirty feet long."

The creature had glistening skin and long arms with suckers, which left impressions on the hull. "It was enormous," Kersauson recalled. "I've been sailing for forty years and I've always had an answer for everything—for hurricanes and icebergs. But I didn't have an answer for this. It was terrifying."

What they claimed they saw—a claim that many regarded as a tall tale—was a giant squid, an animal that has long occupied a central place in sea lore; it has been said to be larger than a whale and stronger than an elephant, with a beak that can sever steel cables. In a famous scene in "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," Jules Verne depicts a battle between a submarine and a giant squid that is twenty-five feet long, with eight arms and blue-green eyes—"a terrible monster worthy of all the legends about such creatures." More recently, Peter Benchley, in his thriller "Beast," describes a giant squid that "killed without need, as if Nature, in a fit of perverse malevolence, had programmed it to that end."

Such fictional accounts, coupled with scores of unconfirmed sightings by sailors over the years, have elevated the giant squid into the fabled realm of the fire-breathing dragon and the Loch Ness monster. Though the giant squid is no myth, the species, designated in scientific literature as *Architeuthis*, is so little understood that it sometimes seems like one. A fully grown giant squid is classified as the largest invertebrate on Earth, with tentacles sometimes as long as a city bus and eyes about the size of human heads. Yet no scientist has ever examined a live specimen—or seen one swimming in the sea. Researchers have studied only carcasses, which have occasionally washed ashore or floated to

The giant squid has consumed the imaginations of many oceanographers. How could something so big remain unseen for so long—or be less understood than dinosaurs?

the surface. (One corpse, found in 1887 in the South Pacific, was said to be nearly sixty feet long.) Other evidence of the giant squid is even more indirect: sucker marks have been spotted on the bodies of sperm whales, as if burned into them; presumably, the two creatures battle each other hundreds of feet beneath the ocean's surface.

The giant squid has consumed the imaginations of many oceanographers. How could something so big and powerful remain unseen for so long—or be less understood than dinosaurs, which died out millions of years ago? The search for a living specimen has inspired a fevered competition. For decades, teams of scientists have prowled the high seas in the hope of glimpsing one. These "squid squads" have in recent years invested millions of dollars and deployed scores of submarines and underwater cameras, in a struggle to be first.

Steve O'Shea, a marine biologist from New Zealand, is one of the hunters—but his approach is radically different. He is not trying to find a mature giant squid; rather, he is scouring the ocean for a baby, called a paralarva, which he can grow in captivity. A paralarva is often the size of a cricket.

"Squid, you see, hatch thousands of babies," O'Shea told me recently, when I called him at his office at the Earth and Oceanic Sciences Research Institute, at the Auckland University of Technology. "Most of these will get eaten up by larger predators, but during periods of spawning the sea should be filled with an absolutely fantastic amount of these miniature organisms. And, unlike the adults, they shouldn't be able to dart away as easily."

Rival hunters once viewed his plan skeptically: if no one could find the animal when it was sixty feet long, how could anyone discover it when it was barely an eighth of an inch? Lately, though, many have come to see O'Shea's strategy as a potential breakthrough. "It offers several advantages," Clyde Roper, an American who is perhaps the world's foremost expert on squid, told me. Roper is a giant-squid hunter himself, who once descended underwater in a steel cage, in search of his quarry. "First, you could find the juvenile at shallower depths. That makes it a lot easier to catch. Furthermore, there are more of them around, because at that stage, even though mortality is high, the adult female will release up to four million eggs. That's a hell of a lot of baby giant squid running around." He added, "It's a matter of a numbers game, pure and simple."

AN ENCOUNTER IN THE HAIGHT

(*circa 1968*)

What were they after all? Birds of a feather?
Two poets of distinctly minor make.
Whiskey and chance had bundled them together
In San Francisco at the Double Take.

She bit his neck and giggled in his ear.
She had the thing desired, such as it is.
He checked his watch. She finished off her beer
And grinned, mixing her drunken breath with his.

There was a spare room in a nearby house
Where an old friend, he knew, would not deny him,
And there they steered posthaste—nor did he guess
How soon, how long this act would mortify him.

But now he would not stop for anything;
Their clothes were scattered all across the floor;
His will was bent to his unburdening,
Beyond amendment. Needless to say more.

In 1999, O'Shea studied what few had ever seen—the corpse of a baby *Architeuthis*, which was discovered off New Zealand. He described its curious morphology: two eyes spread disconcertingly far apart; a parrot-like mouth concealing a raspy, serrated tongue; eight arms extending outward from a torpedo-shaped head. Each elastic limb was lined with hundreds of suckers, ringed with sharp teeth. The skin was iridescent, and filled with chromatophores—groups of pigment cells—that allowed it to change colors. A funnel near its head could shoot out clouds of black ink. The specimen also had two extraordinary-looking clubbed tentacles. (When a giant squid is mature, they can stretch up to thirty feet.)

Armed with this rare expertise, O'Shea has spent the last five years mapping out where to find a baby giant squid and puzzling over how to catch one and grow it in a tank. This year, he told me, he would venture out during the summer nights of the Southern Hemisphere, when giant squid released their babies. "Come on down, mate," he said. "We'll see if we can't find the bloody thing and make history."

The bodies of dead giant squid have been found in nearly every ocean: in the Pacific, near California; in the Atlantic, off the coasts of Newfoundland and Norway; and in the Indian, south of South Africa. But no place is considered better for hunting giant squid than the waters around New Zealand. It is here that currents from the tropics and Antarctica converge, and the resulting diversity of marine life creates an abundance of plankton for squid to feed on. And it is here that, in recent years, more dead giant squid have been recovered than anywhere else.

I arrived in Auckland on a morning in late February, and O'Shea greeted me at the airport. He looked much younger than his age, thirty-eight. He wore khaki pants and a khaki-colored shirt, a uniform that evoked a safari ranger. He is small and trim, and has brown hair, which was sticking up as if he had just run his fingers through it. Peering through spectacles that made his eyes seem abnormally large, he confessed with some embarrassment that he had come for me the previous day. "I've been preoccupied with everything that's happening," he said.

And what of her? By now she barely stirred.
A sign, perhaps, her ardor had diminished?
Her eyes were closed, she did not say a word.
Not that it would have mattered—he was finished.

Poor body, that for a fugitive desire
Courts such humiliation and self-loathing!
Was it for this they grappled in the mire
And shamed themselves? For this they tore their clothing?

Those blind lusts—though it was not so much lust
As the attraction of two emptinesses—
Embraced goodbye with delicate disgust,
Brushing aside the customary kisses.

Outside, the wind blew, it was cold and wet,
The bars were closing. Lust, which conquers all,
Had caught the writhing creatures in his net.
The summer of Love was over; it was fall.

—*Robert Mezey*

He spoke in a soft yet intense murmur, and whenever I addressed him he would turn his head sideways, so that I was talking directly into his right ear. (Later, he told me that he had damaged his left ear in a diving accident.) He reached into his wallet and pulled out his business card; beside his name was a picture of an iridescent squid. While I was looking at it, he grabbed one of my bags and hurried to his truck, which, as soon as he opened the driver's door, exhaled a strange, pungent odor. "I do apologize," he said, as he rolled down the windows. "You'll find that everything around me smells of dead squid and ciggies." In the back seat was a metal pole that was three feet long, with a net on the end. I soon discovered that he carried it with him wherever he went, often slung over his shoulder, as if he were a butterfly hunter.

Over the next few days, we began making preparations for our maiden voyage. At one point, we were speeding down the highway, heading to the store for supplies, when he slammed on the brakes and reversed, in the middle of traffic. "I almost forgot," he said, parking in a lot that overlooked a harbor. He leaped out with the net and darted down a wharf, a lit cigarette dangling from his mouth. He leaned over the edge, the winds buffeting his face, and held the net high over his head. For a moment, he didn't move or breathe. "There," he said, and lunged with the net, slashing at the water. As he pulled the net in, his pant legs wet with spray, I glimpsed a dozen silvery sprat—a minnow-like fish—dancing in the mesh. "I know I look a bit like a bugger," he said. "But these things are rather important."

After he flung the net into the water several more times ("Believe it or not, there is a technique to this," he said), he returned to his truck and tossed the sprat into a white bucket in the back seat. We travelled farther down the road, the sprat jostling behind us, and eventually stopped at an aquarium called Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World. (In its brochures, O'Shea was hailed as the "world-renowned squid man.")

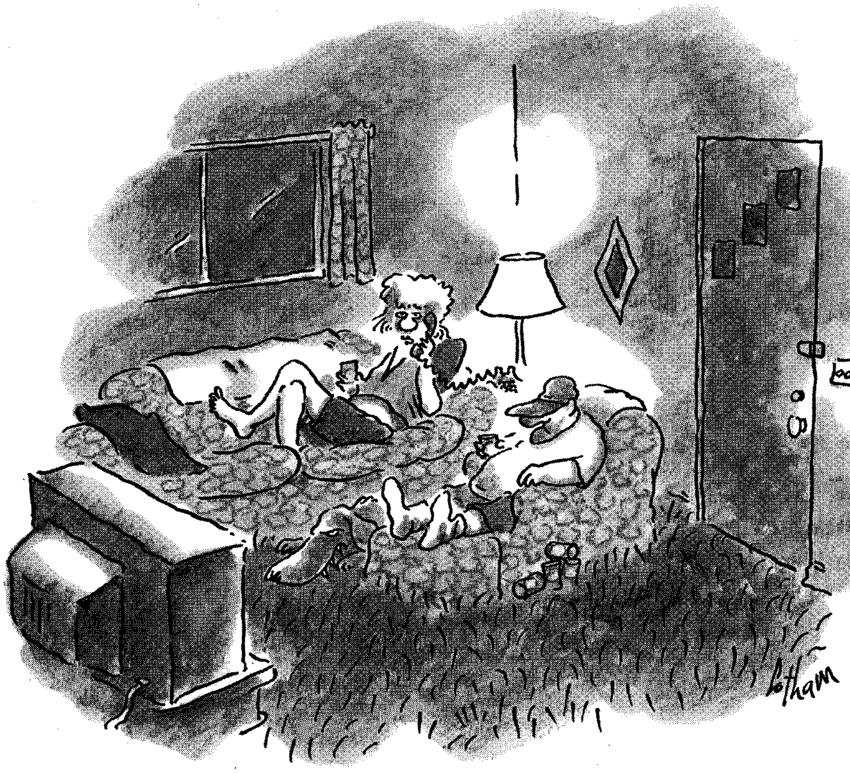
He grabbed the bucket, and we headed inside. "This is where I keep them," he told me. He led me into a damp room with fluorescent lights, in which there was a round glass tank; inside, darting from side to side, were seventy baby squid, each an inch long. O'Shea explained that these squid, which are found in coastal areas, were a smaller species than *Architeuthis*. "Look at them," he said. "They're bloody marvellous, aren't they?"

O'Shea is one of the few people in the world who have succeeded in keeping not only coastal but also deep-sea squid alive in captivity. Unlike an octopus, which, as he put it, "you can't kill, no matter how hard you try," a squid is highly sensitive to its environment. Accustomed to living in a borderless realm, a squid reacts poorly when placed in a tank, and will often plunge, kamikaze-style, into the walls, or cannibalize other squid.

In 2001, during a monthlong expedition at sea, O'Shea caught a cluster of paralarval giant squid in his nets, but by the time he reached the docks all of them had died. He was so distraught that he climbed into the tank, in tears, and retrieved the corpses himself. "I had spent every day, every hour, trying to find the paralarvae, and then they died in my grasp," he told me. For two years, he was so stricken by his failure that he refused to mount another expedition. "I knew if I failed again I would be finished," he recalled. "Not just scientifically but physically and emotionally."

He couldn't stop wondering, though, about what had happened in the tank. His wife, Shoba, a computer scientist who was born in India, told me that sometimes in the middle of an unrelated conversation he would suddenly say, "What did I do wrong?" O'Shea became determined to correct what he called "my fatal mistake," and began a series of painstaking experiments on other species of juvenile deep-sea squid. He would subtly alter the conditions of captivity: tank size, intensity of light, oxygen levels, salinity. He discovered that the tank in which he had stored his paralarvae during the expedition had two lethal flaws: it had a rectangular shape, which, for some reason, caused the squid to sink to the bottom and die; and its walls were made of polyethylene, a plastic compound that, it turns out, is toxic to deep-sea squid. "Knowing what I know now, I feel like a fool," he said. "It was like walking them to their execution."

In the mid-nineteen-seventies, Clyde Roper managed to keep ocean-dwelling squid alive for fourteen days—then a record. O'Shea, using cylindrical tanks made of acrylic, had kept his latest coastal specimens alive for eighty days. Earlier, he had maintained a batch of deep-sea squid



"He believes domestic disputes should be between a man and a woman."

• •

for more than seventy days, which he then returned to the wild, satisfied that his experiment was a success.

He held up his white bucket. "Watch this," he said, and dumped the sprat into the tank. Though the fish were bigger than the squid, the squid shot toward them, with their arms curved over their heads, hiding their tentacles; they looked metallic, except for their bulging green eyes. Then the squids' arms sprang open, and their tentacles exploded outward, lashing their prey. The fish squirmed to break free, but the squid engulfed them in a web of arms. They drew their frantic prey into their beaks, and the squids' stomachs turned bright red as they filled with the blood of the fish. Staring into the tank, I imagined what a full-grown giant squid might look like swallowing its prey.

When the squid finished eating, O'Shea said, "If I can keep *these* squid alive, there's no reason I can't keep the giant alive. I'll just need a bigger tank."

He was nervous about what would happen to his squid during our expedition—he had left the animals alone for only one day, on Christmas—and he anxiously arranged with an employee at the aquarium to care for them in his absence. "You need to treat them with reverence," he said.

We then headed to his university office, where he had to gather various things for the expedition. It was in an attic-like space, and seemed entirely devoted to what he described as his "lunatic obsession." Pasted to the walls and stacked on tables were pictures, many of which he had sketched himself, of giant squid, colossal squid, broad squid, warty squid, leopard squid. In addition, there were squid toys, squid key chains, squid journals, squid movies, and squid-related newspaper clippings ("WARNING! GIANT FLYING SQUID ATTACKING VESSELS OFF AUSTRALIA"). On the floor were dozens of glass jars filled with dead squid that had been preserved in alcohol, their eyes and tentacles pressing against the glass.

Many squid scientists wait for decades before getting their hands on the remains of an *Architeuthis*. O'Shea, however, has developed a large network of fishermen informants, and in the last seven years has collected a hundred and seventeen corpses. Together, these specimens offer a clearer picture of the giant squid. O'Shea has concluded that although the animals could be as heavy as a thousand pounds, most weigh between a hundred and four hundred pounds. (Females are typically heavier than males.) His squid collection also provided some of the first clues about the animal's diet. In an article recently published in the *New Zealand Journal of Zoology,* O'Shea documented the "gut contents" of his specimens, which included arrow squid and chunks of another *Architeuthis* ("proof of cannibalism").

In another recent experiment, O'Shea dissected a squid's statolith: a bonelike particle in the animal's ear that helps the animal balance itself. A statolith builds up rings of calcium deposits over time, he explained, and, like the rings on tree trunks, the layers of bone might help scientists determine a squid's age and growth rate.

Initially, O'Shea told me, he had thought that he would dissect his corpses in his office. But, after he made an incision in one, the specimen released a noxious odor, a mixture of rotting flesh and ammonium (which keeps the animal buoyant in the water). Students and faculty fled the building, and he was soon forbidden to make further dissections there. "I became quite unpopular after that," he said.

He began to pick up various jars. "Oh, here it is," he said, holding up what appeared to be a stem of tiny grapes.

"What is it?" I asked.

"The eggs from the ovary of a giant squid. I have a freezer full of 'em."

The phone rang. He stared at it without moving. "They'll only want something," he said.

He stuck a pair of tweezers inside the jar, pulled out a strand of eggs, and placed it under a microscope. "Go ahead, mate, take a look," he said. When I looked into the eyepiece, I could see at least a hundred eggs, each no more than two millimetres wide. O'Shea said that he planned to attach the eggs, which may produce pheromones, to an underwater camera, in the hope of luring a giant squid close enough to be captured on film.

He sat at his computer, typed for a few minutes, then stopped abruptly and ran out of the office. He returned moments later, carrying two hula hoops. "We're almost ready," he said.

The phone rang again. "Oh, bloody hell," he said, and let it ring. He picked up another jar, this one containing two black shells that appeared to lock together. "It's the beak of a giant squid," he said. I ran my finger along its sharp edge, which pricked my skin. He said he had found it inside the stomach of a sperm whale.

He began to race around again, and before long his arms were filled with a box of specimen jars, the hula hoops, a net, a hammer, a rope, a worn leather briefcase that was only half buckled, and several rolled-up maps. "O.K., I think we're about ready," he said. "I just need a smoke, and we'll be off."

For months, he had been carefully working out our destination, studying squid migration patterns as well as satellite readings of water currents and temperatures. His plan was to go south, where he had found the paralarvae before. At the last minute, however, he changed his mind. "We're going north," he said. As we got back in his truck, he added, "I should warn you, there's a bit of a cyclone coming our way."

For as long as sailors have been going out to sea, they have been returning with stories of monsters. The Bible speaks of "a dragon that is in the sea"; the Roman encyclopedia "Naturalis Historia" tells of an enormous "polyp" that was "smeared with brine and had a terrible smell." As the science writer Richard Ellis demonstrates in his 1998 book, "The Search for the Giant Squid," from these disparate accounts emerged a common portrait of a singular beast: a huge sea creature, with fearsome appendages—arms or horns or feet or legs or tails—that jutted out of its head. In the Odyssey, Homer describes a beast called the Scylla:

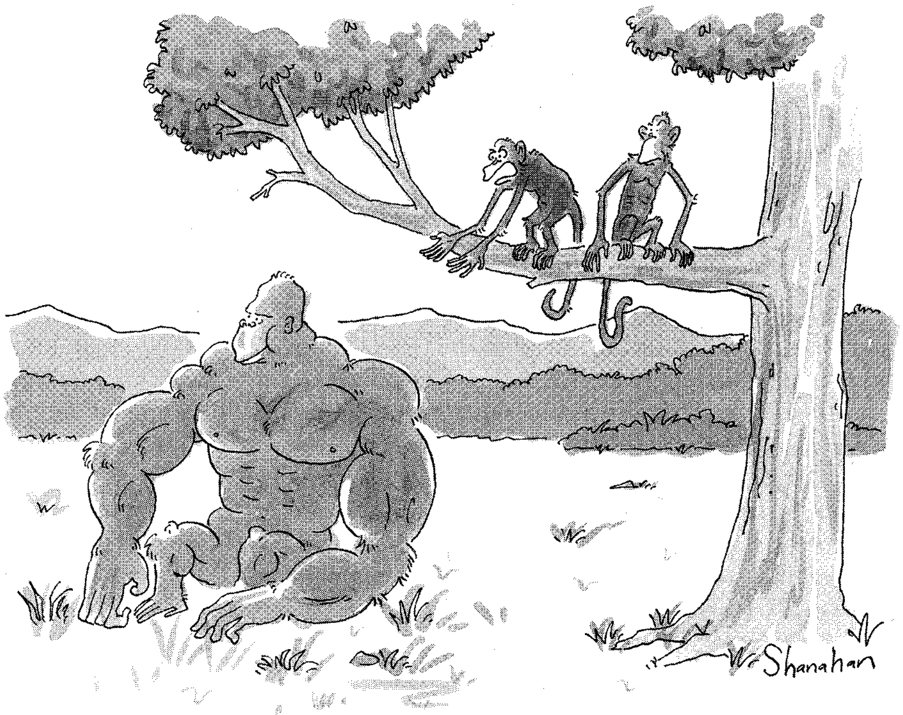
> She has twelve legs, all writhing, dangling down
> and six long swaying necks, a hideous head on each,
> each head barbed with a triple row of fangs . . .
> No mariners yet can boast they'd raced their ship
> past Scylla's lair without some mortal blow.

In Norway, sailors sometimes reported sightings of a tentacled predator, which they dubbed the Kraken. (The word is a colloquial term for a tree with the roots still attached.) In 1755, Bishop Erik Ludvigsen Pontoppidan included the animal in his "Natural History of Norway," claiming that the Kraken was the size of a "floating island," with horns as long as a ship's mast. He went on, "It seems these are the creature's arms, and, it is said, if they were to lay hold of the largest man-of-war, they would pull it down to the bottom."

Meanwhile, American whalers were exchanging their own stories of a "devilfish." In 1851, Herman Melville, who had worked for three years on a whaling ship, published "Moby Dick," in which he describes a sailor who is witness to "the most wondrous phenomenon": a "vast pulpy mass" with "innumerable long arms radiating from its centre, and curling and twisting like a nest of anacondas."

Around the same time, Johannes Japetus Smith Steenstrup, an eminent Danish zoologist, decided to investigate the rumors himself. As Steenstrup sorted through the available evidence, he was drawn in particular to several accounts of a strange beast caught in the Øresund Strait in the fifteen-forties, and brought to the king of Denmark, at whose court it was preserved in a dried state as "a rarity and a wonder." Named a "sea monk," because its smooth-looking head evoked men of the cloister, it resembled, in an original sketch, a large squid. In an 1854 lecture, Steenstrup declared that the sea monk, like the Kraken, was "firstly a cephalopod"—a classification term which derives from the Greek words for "head" and "foot," and refers to animals whose tentacles sprout from their head. To the amazement of his audience, Steenstrup then held up a glass jar containing the jaws of a giant squid, which he said had been retrieved from a dead specimen off the coast of Iceland. He named the creature *Architeuthis* ("ruling squid")—marking, as Ellis has noted, "the official passage of the giant squid from the realm of fable into the scientific literature."

Just as seamen had previously exaggerated the evidence for the giant squid's existence, the scientific community now exaggerated the lack of it. Most scientists were still disputing Steenstrup's findings when, in November, 1861, the crew of the French steamship Alecton, in the middle of the Atlantic, saw a Kraken rise up before them. The captain decided that he had to capture it, and ordered his men to fire their muskets. The bullets seemed to have little effect, so they hurled harpoons, which appeared to glance off it. Finally, they wrapped a noose around its tail, but, as they began to haul the creature on board, its enormous weight caused the rope to slice through its boneless flesh. All that remained was a piece of the tail, which was soon dispatched, along with a detailed report, to the French Academy of Sciences. The report inspired Jules Verne's depiction of a menacing giant squid, but it did little to secure the organism a certified place in the animal kingdom. Arthur Mangin, a French zoologist, declared that



"Grasses and leaves? Just look at him!"

the rotting tail was the remains of a sea plant, and urged "the wise, and especially the man of science, not to admit into the catalogue those stories which mention extraordinary creatures . . . the existence of which would be . . . a contradiction of the great laws of harmony and equilibrium which have sovereign rule over living nature."

Scientists continued to doubt Steenstrup's thesis until one day in 1873, when a fisherman off the coast of Newfoundland saw a creature floating on the ocean's surface and struck it with a hook. The animal was alive, and reached up and tried to seize him; the fisherman then grabbed an axe. Over the years, the story was embellished, but one fact was undeniable: the fisherman returned to shore with a tentacle from a giant squid, which was nineteen feet long. It was placed in a museum, in St. John's, Newfoundland, where the public could see it. At last, even the most ardent skeptic was forced to admit that the Kraken was real.

As the winds and rains from the cyclone began to descend on New Zealand, O'Shea stood in his back yard beside his boat, which rested on a trailer. The boat was not exactly what I had imagined it to be. It was barely twenty feet long and seven feet wide, with an outboard motor. There was no galley or head, and no place to sleep, except for a forward berth the size of a broom closet. "I suppose you were expecting one of those American yachts, weren't you?" O'Shea said with a smile.

Initially, he had planned to charter a vessel with a traditional squid squad—a professional crew and a team of scientists. Squid hunters from Japan, America, and Europe crisscrossed the sea in this manner, and O'Shea had been on such a voyage when he found his paralarvae. But such expeditions cost millions of dollars, and O'Shea is an academic who must cobble together funding for his research from private sources, like the Discovery Channel. He had already sunk a significant portion of his family's modest savings into his quest, and as a result he was unable to afford a hearing aid, among other necessities. "If I don't find a giant squid soon, I'll be ruined," he told me.

Yet, according to other hunters, part of the genius of O'Shea's scheme is that it can be executed relatively cheaply. Juvenile squid swim in shallower waters than adults, and he didn't need to descend, say, in a submarine. He also didn't require a ship that could accommodate a huge tank. By December, O'Shea had decided that he would go forward using his own fishing boat, and he whittled down his crew to three people: O'Shea, myself, and a graduate student in marine biology named Peter Conway, a gentle thirty-two-year-old vegetarian who rolled his own cigarettes and had never been on such an expedition. "The big swells make me a wee queasy," he confessed at one point.

O'Shea told me that he was not willing to wait for the cyclone to pass: there was only a short period each year during which adult squid migrated into the region to spawn and release their eggs. And so we set off in the truck, with the trailer in tow, and headed north, listening to Neil Diamond's slightly nasal tenor on the stereo. ("He's bloody brilliant, isn't he?" O'Shea said.)

Within a few hours, the exquisite landscape of New Zealand, with its long white shores and volcanic hills and sheep farms, was obscured in blackness, as the storm intensified. The trailer rocked in the wind, which was approaching gale force. According to news reports, a nearby river had burst its banks, forcing local residents to evacuate. Civil-defense teams were being called up, and the power had gone out in several cities, including Auckland.

The police were warning motorists to stay off the roads, but we continued farther up the northern peninsula, past towns with Aboriginal names like Te Kao and Te Hapua, until we arrived at a wooden cabin, in the afternoon. We would stay here during the day, O'Shea explained, then launch the boat at night, when the squid rose upward in the water column to feed.

The cabin had no phone and no heat, and it was musty inside, as if it had been abandoned for years. "Not bloody much, is it?" O'Shea said, as he brushed some ants off the kitchen table. He didn't seem too dismayed, though, and while Conway and I unpacked our bags he spread his equipment across the floor and began to assemble a peculiar form. First, he took a round plywood board that was the size of a stop sign and drilled holes around its perimeter. He wove cable ties through the holes, then attached the board to a tube of fine-meshed netting that was large enough to accommodate him inside it. He was still working when Conway and I went to bed; when I got up the next morning, I found him in the same position. "It's coming along nicely," he said. A candle was burning beside him, and he held a sharp knife over the flame. Using the hot blade, he cut several holes into the sides of the net.

The slow, methodical work had put him in a reflective mood, and he told me how he first became interested in the giant squid. "It had never been my plan," he said. "When I was four or five, my parents got divorced, and I was sent to live with my grandmother. I didn't have many friends. I was one of these horribly geeky kids. I had glasses and a heart murmur and arthritis, and I spent all my time on the beach, looking for shells. I collected thousands of them. When I was thirteen or fourteen, I started to go out on commercial fishing boats in the summer to try to find the rarest kinds. I remember once, I was on this boat, and the fishermen pulled in this shell. I knew there were only one or two in all of New Zealand, and I let out this loud scream, and the captain came down and yelled at me for screaming, but I didn't mind. I was so excited to find it."

He burned another hole in the net, filling the room with an acrid smell. He said, "After I graduated from the university with a doctorate in marine biology, I went to work for the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research. In 1996, I got a phone call saying that a fisherman had found a giant squid down in Wellington, and did I want it. I'd never seen one, so I raced down to the jetty, and took one look at it, and it was the biggest bloody thing I'd ever seen. I knew it wouldn't fit in the car, and so I borrowed a trailer, and strapped it down with the tentacles draped over the car.

"Before long, the press got wind of it, and they started calling and asking me all these questions, and I didn't know anything about the giant squid. I spouted a bunch of nonsense, and I soon realized no one really knew *anything* about this blasted thing. It was this great unknown, this complete mystery. And I've been trying to solve it ever since."

He seemed slightly embarrassed by his candor. "What we need now are Coke bottles," he said. He had brought several empty one-litre containers with him; he sliced each bottle in half, so that the top

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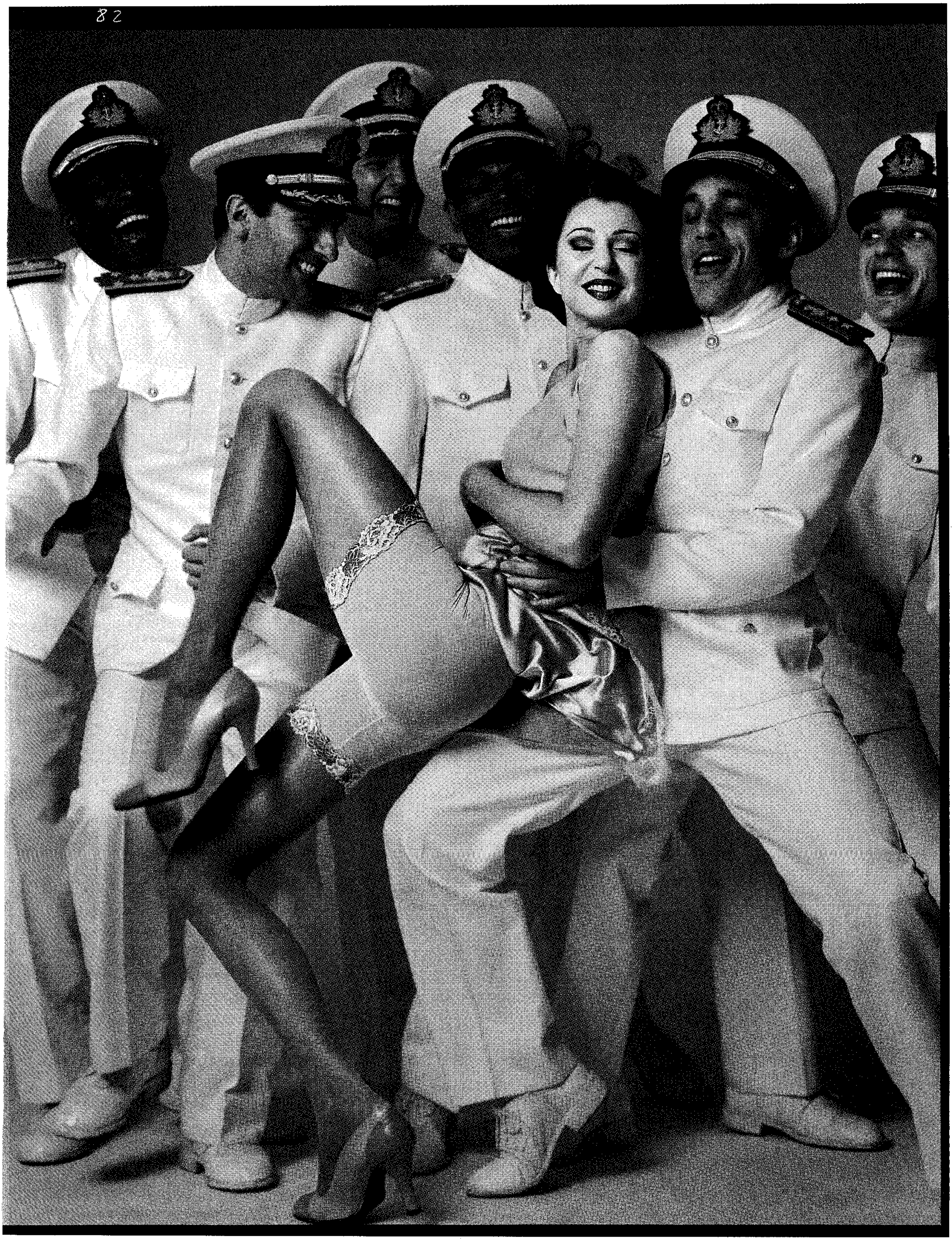


PORTRAIT BY RICHARD AVEDON *The incandescent Donna Murphy takes a break from "Conga!" and relaxes in the arms of admirals from the Brazilian fleet, in the revival of "Wonderful Town," which has received five Tony Award nominations.*

part resembled a funnel. He inserted each funnel, the wide part facing out, into the holes that he had made in the mesh netting. He then sealed them in place with a glue gun. "We're ready for the final touches," he said. He slid a hula hoop inside the bottom end of the mesh sheath; the result looked like a Victorian skirt. Finally, he clamped the bottom of the net to a small glass container.

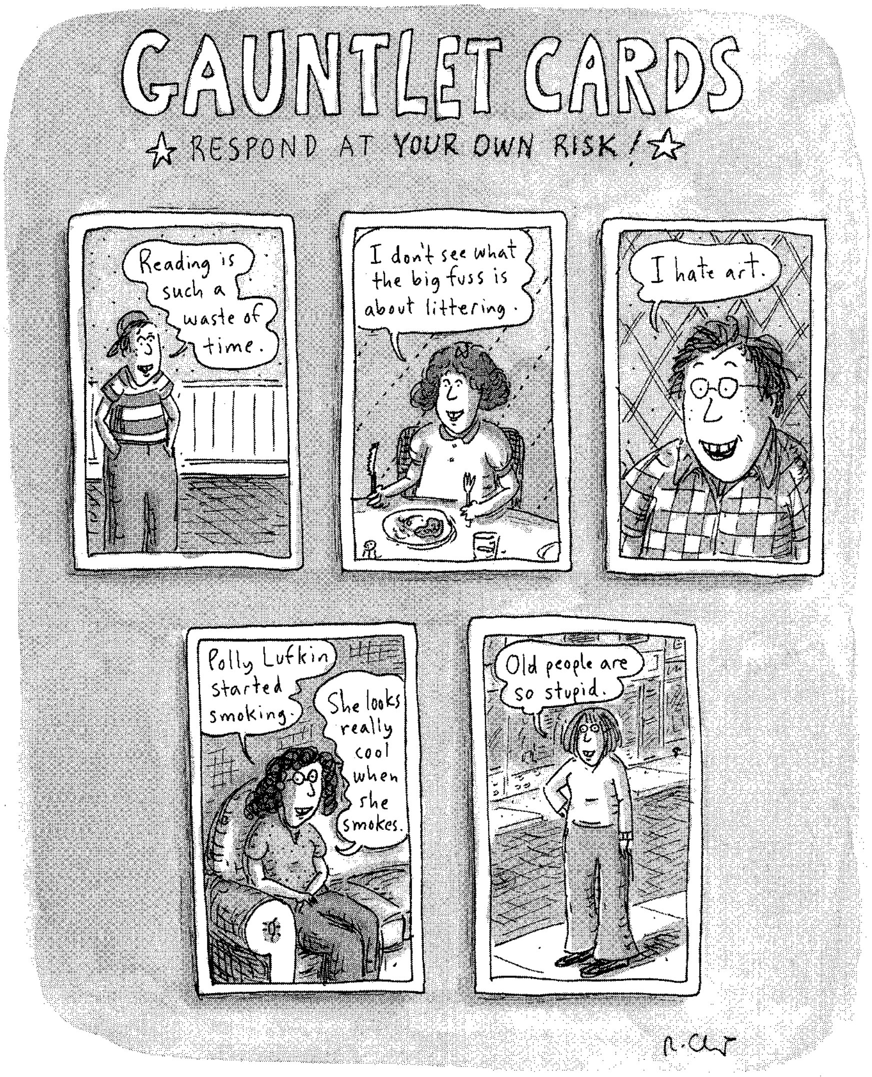
He climbed onto a chair and held the contraption up: it was roughly six feet long and cylindrical in shape, with a round hardwood top, a funnel-studded net draped along the sides, and a little glass jar dangling on the bottom. "Whaddaya think, chappies?" O'Shea asked Conway and me.

"What is it?" I asked.

"A giant-squid trap."

O'Shea pointed to the funnels excitedly, and explained that the paralarvae would swim through them and get trapped inside the net, eventually ending up in the glass jar. This rough-looking device had been carefully conceived: the net was made of extra-fine mesh, which would do less damage to the animals; the board was marine plywood, which would keep the net vertical in the water; and the Coke bottles were exactly the right size to trap the paralarvae. "It's ugly as sin, I admit, but it should do the job," he said, adding, "I'm a poor scientist, so it's a bit of Steve O'Shea invention."

He spent the rest of the day building a second trap, then announced that it was time to go hunting. The worst of the storm had blown out to sea, but the weather remained volatile, with gusting winds and dangerously high waves. Two surfers had drowned. "We'll have to do some reconnaissance," O'Shea said. Before sundown, we took a drive with the trailer, trying to find a safe place to launch the boat. We pulled into an inlet surrounded by volcanic cliffs. "This will have to do," O'Shea said.


GAUNTLET CARDS
☆ RESPOND AT YOUR OWN RISK! ☆
Reading is such a waste of time.
I don't see what the big fuss is about littering.
I hate art.
Polly Lufkin started smoking.
She looks really cool when she smokes.
Old people are so stupid.

He backed the trailer down the beach, and we put the boat in the water. I climbed on board, and O'Shea and Conway followed. It was cold, but O'Shea was barefoot, and he was wearing only cutoff jeans and a baggy T-shirt. "Righteo, then," he said, and gunned the engine.

O'Shea had no radar, but he had a navigational system with a small flickering display that signalled the location of the shore and the depth of the sea. It would be our only guide in the darkness.

"It'll probably be too rough out there for any fishing boats," O'Shea shouted over the noise of the engine. "But we're going to need to be careful of container ships. They can come up pretty fast." It was now twilight, and he squinted at one of the buoys that marked a safe route through the channel.

"What color is that?" he asked me.

"It's green," I said. "Can't you see it?"

"I'm not just deaf," he said. "I'm colorblind."

As we left the harbor, it began to rain, and the smooth channel gave way to swells. The boat leaped over the crests, its aluminum hull vibrating.

"A bit rough, ain't it?" Conway said.

"She's sturdier than she looks," O'Shea said of the vessel. He glanced at the forward berth. "Underneath those cushions are the life jackets. You don't need to wear them, but just so you know where they are."

The sun disappeared over the horizon, and for a while the sky released a flurry of bright colors, as if it had its own chromatophores. Then it grew dark, and the waves announced themselves not by sight but by sound, as they clapped against the bow. I slipped on my life jacket.

O'Shea said he knew just the spot for hunting, and he stared at the glowing dots on the navigational system. "Where are we going?" I asked.

"There," he said, pointing into the distance.

I peered over the windshield and saw something shadowy looming over the waves, as if it were the prow of a ship. As we got closer, I realized that it was a large, jagged rock. More rocks became visible, hundreds of them, all jutting skyward. A channel, forty feet wide, flowed between the rocks, and the water stormed through this opening as if it were racing down a chute. O'Shea sped straight ahead. As we approached the rocks, the boat began to tremble while the swells climbed from ten to seventeen feet; the bow plunged downward, the boat sliding wildly in the water. "Hold on, mate," O'Shea said. "Here comes a big one."

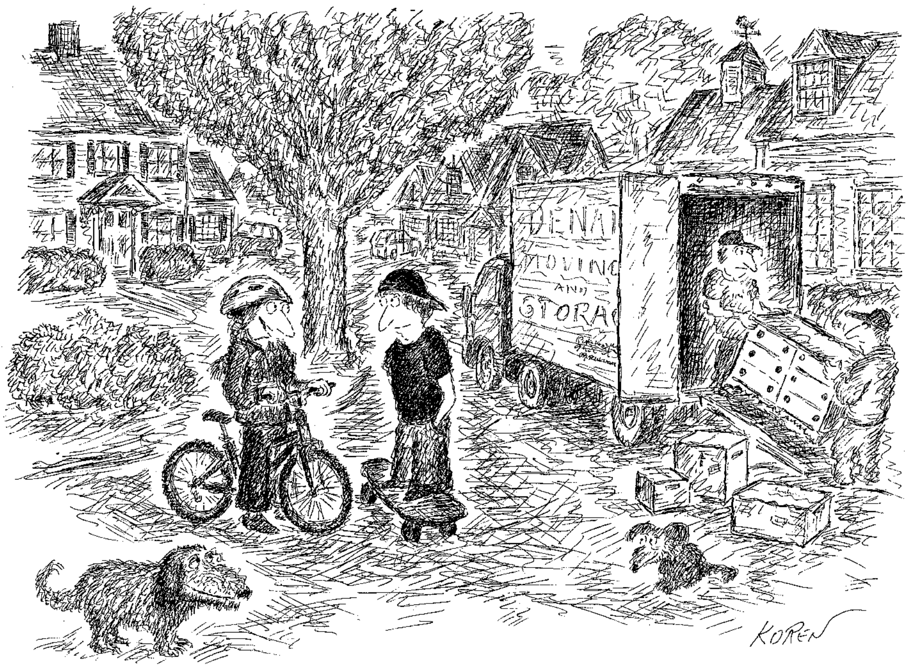
The boat soared upward, and I felt momentarily suspended in the air, as if I were a cartoon character who had just stepped off a cliff. Then the boat fell straight down, and another wave crashed into the boat, sending us hurtling backward. My notebook and pen slid to the deck. The peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches we had packed for supper tumbled out of their containers. "We just need to make sure they don't take us broadside," O'Shea said.

The currents were pulling us toward the rocks, and I could hear the massive waves crashing into them. I was holding a flashlight, and I shone it in front of us: there was a twenty-foot wall of water. I turned around, and discovered that another enormous wall was pressing down on us from behind.

"You won't find this in New York, will you, mate?" O'Shea said.

For a moment, I wondered if O'Shea was fully in command of his faculties. But we made it through the gap in the rocks, and he skillfully steered the boat into a protected inlet. It was indeed the perfect spot.

We dropped our anchor. O'Shea grabbed his homemade nets, and placed several glow sticks inside them. "The squid are drawn to the light," he said. He tied the nets to a lead weight, which he then dropped in the water. We watched the light grow dimmer as the traps sank. "Well, let's see what's down there," O'Shea said.



"You're moving into a place where all the parents live well and all the kids test well."

Though oceans cover three-quarters of the Earth—the Pacific alone is bigger than all the continents put together—the underwater realm has remained largely invisible to human beings. For centuries, there was no way for scientists to peer into the depths, no telescope that could gaze into the abyss. (A pearl diver can venture down no more than a hundred feet.) Until the nineteenth century, most scientists assumed that the deepest parts of the ocean—where the temperature was frigid, the pressure intense, and the light minimal—contained no life.

In 1872, the British government and the Royal Society launched the first major oceanic expedition, transforming a two-hundred-and-twenty-six-foot naval warship into a floating laboratory, equipped with microscopes and vats of pickling alcohol. Christened the H.M.S. Challenger, the ship, with five scientists, roamed the globe for three and a half years. The crew was constantly dredging the ocean floor for specimens, and the work was repetitive, and brutal; two men went insane, two others drowned, and another committed suicide. The scientists, however, were enthralled with their discoveries. They catalogued more than forty-seven hundred new species—proving, as C. Wyville Thomson, the chief scientist, later noted, that living beings "exist over the whole floor of the ocean."

The voyage gave rise to the field of oceanography, but it also exposed the twin obstacles that would impede underwater exploration for generations: prohibitive costs and primitive technology. Even when scientists could finance expeditions, their equipment allowed them to study animals only after hauling them on deck—the equivalent of looking at a human corpse, then trying to imagine it alive.

In the nineteen-thirties, two wealthy Americans, Charles William Beebe and Otis Barton, used twelve thousand dollars of their own money to design a hollow steel ball with two quartz peepholes, which they called a "bathysphere," named after the Greek word for "deep." The vessel, which was four and a half feet in diameter, was tethered to a ship with a cable; if it snapped, the men inside would die at the bottom of the sea.

In 1934, near Bermuda, Beebe and Barton went down five hundred feet, then a thousand feet more, as greater and greater pressure pushed against the steel walls; they stopped at three thousand and twenty-eight feet. It was far deeper than anyone had ever gone. At one point, Beebe peered out, and spotted something that was at least twenty feet long. Later, in his autobiography, "Half Mile Down," he wrote, "Whatever it was, it appeared and vanished so unexpectedly and showed so dimly that it was quite unidentifiable except as a large, living creature."

In 1960, the United States Navy dispatched its own team of scientists to the bottom of the Mariana Trench, the deepest spot in the ocean floor, in the Western Pacific. (It is seven times as deep as the Grand Canyon.) The voyage was considered among oceanographers to be the equivalent of landing on the moon, but America was caught up in the Cold War, and, because such exploration had little

"I look at his recent work and I see a maturity that just wasn't there in his teen-age break-ins."

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military relevance, similar projects were soon abandoned.

According to one recent study, as much as ninety-five per cent of the oceans remains unexplored. It is believed that the seas contain as many as ten million species, of which fewer than half have been identified. By the nineteen-sixties, the giant squid had become, for oceanographers, an emblem of all that was still unknown about the seas.

In the mid-nineteen-sixties, Frederick Aldrich, a marine biologist from Canada, formed the first official squid squad. He distributed posters around Newfoundland that bore an illustration of a giant squid and the words "WANTED! DEAD OR ALIVE." On one hunting trip, he spent four days in a submersible that he had baited with raw tuna, but, like so many of his expeditions, this one was fruitless.

In the nineteen-nineties, as more squid hunters took up the chase, Clyde Roper decided to let the one animal that was known to prey on *Architeuthis* find it for him. For several years, in oceans ranging from the North Atlantic to the South Pacific, he and his squad paddled out to sea in inflatable kayaks and delicately attached "crittercams"—specially designed underwater cameras—to the bodies of sperm whales. To Roper's disappointment, the crittercams didn't spy a single giant squid. In 1999, Roper, who is sixty-six, underwent a quadruple-bypass operation; though he has promised his family to desist from all the fund-raising that such expeditions require, he recently told me, "I'm hoping to make one more voyage."

Meanwhile, the competition between rival squid squads has intensified. Xander Paumgarten, a publicist who helped to promote a 2000 expedition by Jacques Cousteau's son Jean-Michel, told me, "There's this all-out battle between these guys. Some of them totally hate each other." Roper told me that many of the hunters now work in secret. O'Shea shares his research with several colleagues, whom he calls "gentlemen," but there are some experts he calls "cannibals," with whom he refuses to speak. "A lot of these people are vicious," he said. "They want you to fail so they can be first."

Last January, before I ventured out with O'Shea, I joined the squid squad of Bruce Robison, one of O'Shea's leading counterparts. Unlike other hunters, Robison has two underwater robots, which have superior imaging capabilities and speed through the water more quickly than divers or most submersibles. The robots belong to Robison's employer, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute, which was founded, in 1987, by David Packard, the billionaire technology guru. Situated a hundred miles south of San Francisco, the institute has an annual budget of thirty million dollars. On the expedition I was joining, Robison and his squad planned to sink a robot worth ten million dollars in Monterey Canyon, the deepest underwater chasm along the continental United States.

Robison and his squad are "opportunists," as he put it, meaning that they film more than just squid. ("If you only look for one animal," he said, "you'll always be disappointed.") Nonetheless, the squad had planned to spend six days in the same general area where, in 1980, Robison came closer than perhaps anyone to capturing an adult *Architeuthis.* That day, he had been trawling with a net nearly two thousand feet down; he decided to bring the net to the surface, and snapped its steel jaws shut. The bars clamped down on the tentacle of a live giant squid. Before the net reached the boat, the tentacle had torn off—leaving only twelve feet of it. "There was this big thing hanging off the front of the net," Robison recalled. "The suckers were still grasping." Robison's discovery offered the most accurate recording yet of a giant squid's depth in the water column. "Until then, most people thought they were only near the bottom," he said. Robison later dissected the tentacle and performed chemical analyses; the consistency of the tissue, and its high level of protein, led him to speculate that the giant squid was "a relatively strong swimmer." Robison told me that he had taken a bite of its raw, rubbery flesh. "How could I not?" he said, adding, "It was bitter."

When I arrived at the institute, Robison and his squad were already on board the ship. The vessel was named the Western Flyer, for a fishing vessel that John Steinbeck had sailed on during a 1940 expedition, a journey he later chronicled in "The Log from the Sea of Cortez." The Western Flyer was one of the most incredible ships I had ever seen. It was a hundred and seventeen feet long, with three layers of decks, and it had an unusual rectangular shape. Its boxlike frame rested on two pontoons, each running the length of the boat, allowing the Western Flyer to remain almost still in the roughest seas.

There were twenty-one people in Robison's squad, among them computer scientists, marine biologists, chemists, and engineers. To my surprise, there seemed to be no one on deck when I stepped on board. As I opened the main door, though, I was greeted by a clatter of men and machines. In the center of the cavernous room, surrounded by crewmen communicating through headsets, was the remotely operated vehicle, or R.O.V. It was hanging from a cable attached to a crane; it was the size of a Volkswagen and weighed some eight thousand pounds. At first glance, it appeared to be nothing more than a jumble of wires. The front of the machine, or at least what I presumed was the front, had two large spotlights, which could be rotated. On the top of the machine was an outer shell with a single word painted on it: "TIBURON," Spanish for "shark."

"Welcome aboard," Robison said.

Robison was standing near the R.O.V., coördinating much of the activity. He resembled an eighteenth-century whaling captain, with white hair and a white beard; even his eyebrows were inordinately thick and wild. He began to explain how the robot operated: a coated fibre-optic wire connected the ship to the R.O.V., sending signals back and forth. The machine was propelled by electric thrusters and had flotation devices that allowed it to hover with neutral buoyancy, much like a giant squid, despite weighing four tons. What's more, the R.O.V. was outfitted with eight cameras, providing, as Robison put it, "a complete portrait of a three-dimensional universe." He added, "Our mandate is to go and see what no one else can."

He led me around the rest of the ship, which had a dining room, a computer room, a laboratory, and a freezer for preserving specimens. On the upper deck, along with the bridge, were quarters equipped with televisions, which displayed the Tiburon's live feed. "The dirty secret is that you never have to get out of bed," he said. He left me to settle in my own private room. I soon realized that the boat had already set sail: it cut so smoothly through the water that I hadn't noticed it moving.

That afternoon, we drifted over the Monterey Canyon, and stopped to make our first probe. A team of half a dozen engineers and technicians prepared the Tiburon.

"How do we look on the starboard camera?" one asked.

"Good to go."

"Do you have thrust?"

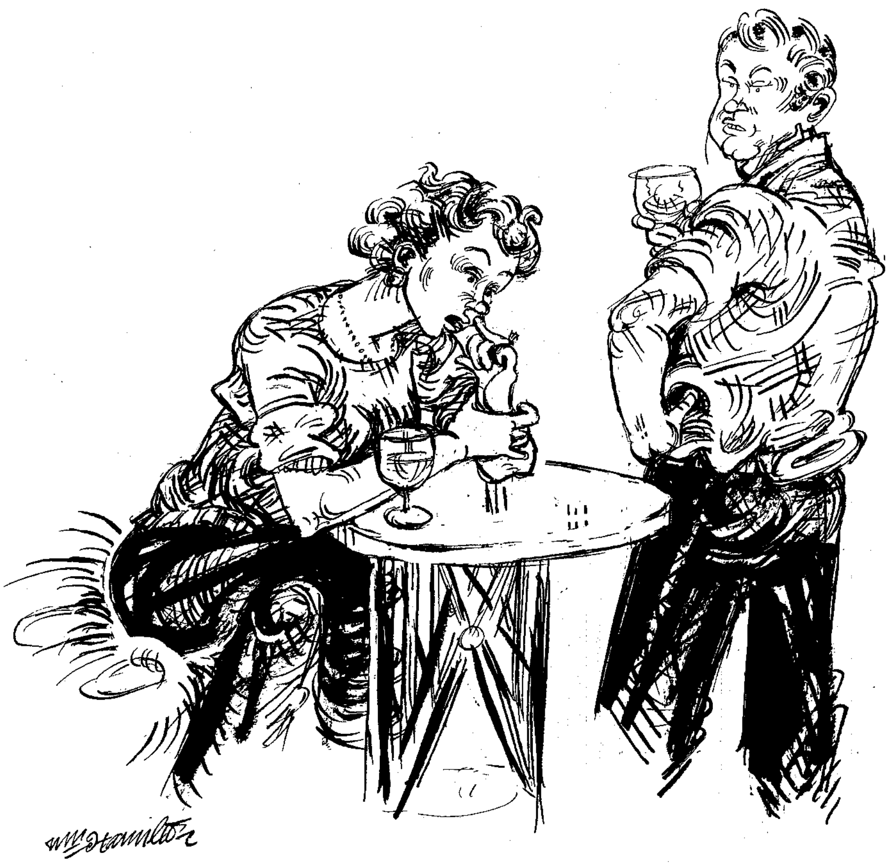
"Roger that."

The crew stepped back and the lights on the Tiburon began to blink. A trapdoor slowly opened, revealing the ocean beneath, and the Tiburon hovered above it like a spaceship. The crane then lowered the R.O.V. into the turbulent water, its snubbed head pitching forward, its fibre-optic cable trailing behind it, like an endless tail.

I walked toward the stern and into the control room, where I expected to find Robison. It was dark, except for nearly two dozen glowing monitors, which broadcast color images from the Tiburon's myriad cameras, each one capturing a different angle. Robison sat beside the pilot, who steered the R.O.V. with a joystick.

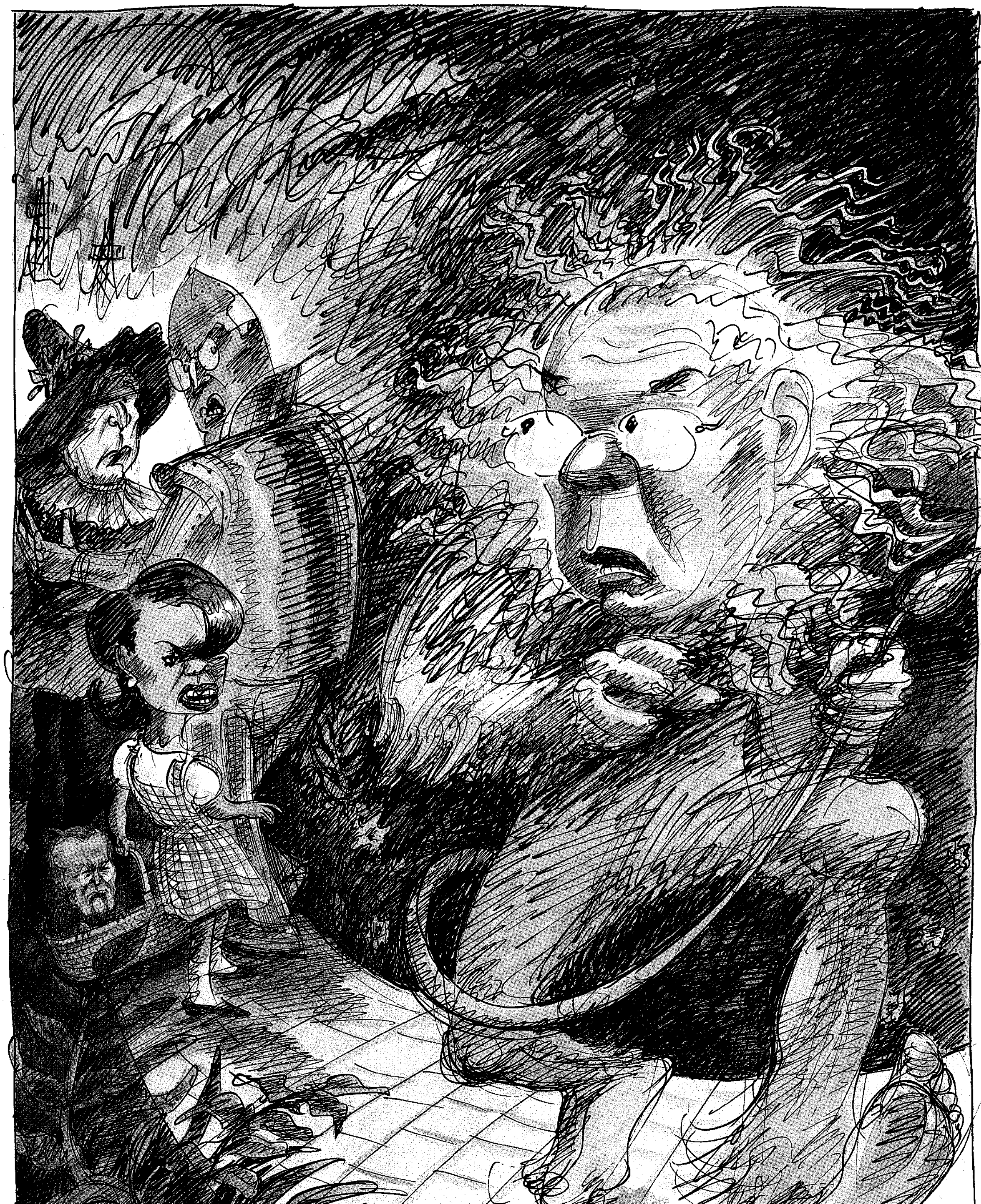
Strange gelatinous creatures began to appear, which gave off dazzling displays of bioluminescence. There was a crustacean that walked through the water like a daddy-longlegs spider, and fish with jaws that were unhinged. There was a *Tiburonia granrojo*, a red balloon-like jellyfish that Robison and his squad had discovered and named for the R.O.V., and that was one of hundreds of new species that the squad had uncovered. There was a diaphanous animal, which they still hadn't identified, and called simply "the mystery mollusk." And there was, when the Tiburon reached the soft, craggy bottom of the ocean, a constant snowfall of decomposing skeletons and microscopic organisms.

Over the next several days, as the Tiburon descended as deep as two miles, we saw hundreds of squid: blue-eyed ones, translucent ones, polka-dotted ones. Observing these squid in their natural habitat, Robison said, provided clues to the behavior of their giant relative. When the camera zoomed in on an individual squid, we could see water entering the muscular sac, or mantle, that contains the squid's internal organs; it then inflated and contracted, shooting the water out through a funnel and propelling the squid like a bullet through the ocean. Watching the animals outrace the robot, I had a sense of why



"You bastard! You've turned this into a conflict diamond."

RUMOR OF THE WEEK BY EDWARD SOREL



In the spirit of the Powell doctrine, the Secretary of State is reported to be devising a clear-cut exit strategy.

Clyde Roper once said of squid, "The only ones you catch are the slow, the sick, and the stupid."

Another reason for their elusiveness is their unusually large eyes, which enable them to discern predators in places where light is nearly absent. (The giant squid's eyes are thought to be the largest of any animal.) Squid also have highly developed brains for an invertebrate, and have nerve fibres that are hundreds of times thicker than those in human beings—allowing them to react in an instant. (For many decades, neuroscientists have relied on squid neurons for their research.) "By observing squid in their natural habitat, we have discovered that they are much more intelligent, much more complex than anything we suspected," Robison said.

As we watched, the squid seemed to be using light patterns, colors, and postures as a means of communication. They didn't just turn red or pink or yellow; ripples of color would wash across their bodies. And they would contort their arms into elaborate arrangements—sometimes balling them together, or holding them above their heads, like flamenco dancers. Robison explained that they use these movements and color changes to warn other squid of predators, to perform mating rituals, to attract prey, and to conceal themselves.

Several times, when the Tiburon got too close to them, the squid ejected streams of black ink. In the past, scientists assumed that it served solely as camouflage or a decoy. Robison told me that he and other scientists now believe the ink contains chemicals that disable predators; this would explain why he has seen deep-sea squid release black nimbuses in depths where there is no light. "As much as we know about squid, we still don't know that much," he said.

Robison noted that the behavior of giant squid, in particular, was poorly understood. No one knows just how aggressive giant squid are, whether they hunt alone or in packs, or whether, as legend has it, they will attack people as well as fish. After Robison caught the tentacle and descended in a submersible to the same spot, he said, "It occurred to me that there was a pissed-off squid out there with a grudge against me." (Other scientists suspect that the giant squid's violent reputation is undeserved; O'Shea, for one, contends that *Architeuthis* is probably a "gentle beast.")

The expedition ended without a glimpse of *Architeuthis*, but, at one point, several jumbo squid did appear on the ship's screens. They were only a fraction of the size of a giant squid—between five and eight feet in length and a hundred or so pounds—but they looked frighteningly strong. One night, several of the ship's scientists dropped a jig, a device specially designed to lure squid, over the side of the boat. They caught two jumbo squid. As they reeled each squid in, screaming, "Pump him up!," the weight and strength of the animals nearly pulled the men overboard. Several minutes later, Robison and I went to the ship's laboratory, where a scientist held up one of the jumbo squid. The creature was nearly as long as Robison is tall, and its tentacles were still lashing and writhing. "Now imagine a giant squid with a tentacle thirty feet long," he said.

After the squid was dissected, part of it was given to the cook. The next day, it appeared on a silver platter. "From beast to feast," the chef said, as we sat down for supper.

"Shall we take a peek?" O'Shea said, leaning over the stern of the boat. It was after midnight, several hours since we had dropped the traps in the water; the rain had stopped, but a cold wind swirled around us. As the boat rocked in the waves, O'Shea pulled in the line, hand over hand, because the boat didn't have winches. The traps weighed at least fifty pounds, and he climbed up on the side of the boat to get a better grip, his bare feet spread apart. As the first net emerged from the water, O'Shea shouted for Conway and me to haul it in, and we laid it on the deck, as icy water spilled around our feet. "Hurry, chappies," O'Shea said. "Get the torch."

Conway shined the flashlight into the net. There were no squid, but there were swarms of krill, and O'Shea seemed buoyed by the discovery. "We're definitely in squid eating country," he said.

He dropped the nets overboard again, anchoring them in place, and began the next phase of the hunt—towing a third, larger net behind the boat. "We'll trawl for fifteen minutes at about one and a half knots," O'Shea said. The maneuver was a delicate one, he explained: if he trawled too deep or not deep enough, the paralarvae would escape the net; if he trawled for too long, the net would suffocate what he caught. We drove the boat around for precisely fifteen minutes, then pulled in the net and dumped its contents—a thick, granular goop—into a cylindrical tank filled with seawater. The tank instantly lit up from all the bioluminescence. "There's plenty of life in there, that's for sure," O'Shea said.

He found no *Architeuthis* in the tank, but he was undaunted. "If it were easy, everyone would be doing it," he said.

By all accounts, O'Shea is tireless and single-minded: he works eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, and he no longer watches TV or reads newspapers. He never attends parties. "I'm not antisocial," he said. "I just don't socialize." His sister told me, "We'd love him even if he chased mushrooms, but we just wish he'd spend the same emotion on people as he did on squid." Shoba, his wife, who often calls him to remind him to eat lunch, said, "I don't want him to stop. I just wish he could temper it a little bit and see that there are other things out there."

People inevitably compare O'Shea's quest to that of Captain Ahab. But, unlike Melville's character, O'Shea does not think of the creature he pursues in grand symbolic terms. Indeed, he is constantly trying to strip the giant squid of its lore. He considers books like "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" to be "rubbish"; his studies of dead specimens have led him to believe that the longest recorded measurement of a giant squid—fifty-seven feet—is apocryphal. "Now, if someone really wanted to prostitute the truth all they have to do is take the tentacle and walk and walk and walk," he once told me. "The bloody things are like rubber bands, and you can make a forty-foot squid suddenly look sixty feet." Unlike some other hunters, he thinks it is ridiculous to imagine that a giant squid could kill a sperm whale. He thinks of the giant squid as both majestic and mundane—with a precise weight, diet, length, and life span. He wants it, in short, to be real. "We have to move beyond this mythical monster and see it as it is," O'Shea said. "Isn't that enough?"

After a while, he stood and dropped the trawling net back in the water. We worked until after sunrise. When we still hadn't found any squid, O'Shea said, "An expedition that begins badly usually ends well."

At the cabin, Conway and I took a brief nap while O'Shea plotted our next course. In the afternoon, we ventured into town for supplies. O'Shea warned us not to use his real name; he had recently campaigned to shut down a nearby fishery in order to protect the wildlife, and he said that he had received several death threats. "This is quite dangerous country for me," he said.

I wasn't sure how seriously to take his warning, but, when I accidentally used his name, he became tense. "Careful, mate," he said. "Careful."

Later that day, O'Shea was standing on the cabin porch, smoking a cigarette, when a villager approached. "Are you the guy chasing them monsters?" he asked.

O'Shea looked at him hesitantly. "I'm afraid that would be me," he said.

"I saw you on the telly, talking about them things," the man said. He reached out his hand. "After I saw you, I named my cat Architeuthis."

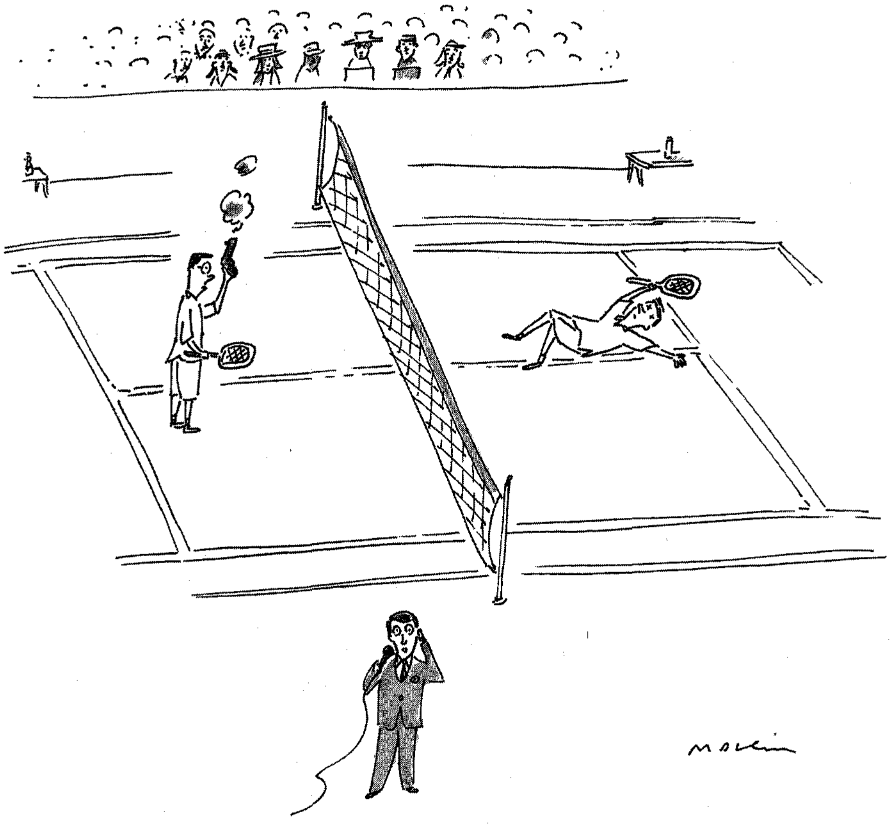
O'Shea brightened. "This mate here has a cat named Archie," he told Conway and me.

O'Shea invited the man in for "a cuppa," and soon he and the stranger were bent down over his maps. "They say you can find the big calamari out here," the man said, pointing to a reef.

Before long, another villager stopped by and was offering his own advice. "I'd try over here," he said. "Billy Tomlin said he once found a big dead one out in these parts." O'Shea took in the information. Fishermen sometimes embroider the truth, he said, but they also know the local waters better than anyone else.

That night, we went out again. Although we continued to haul up enormous quantities of shrimp and krill—sometimes there were so many that they could barely move inside the tank—we found not a single squid. As the night lengthened, O'Shea seemed, for the first time, to grow dispirited. "The weather's causing havoc with the currents," he said.

After each haul, he'd study his charts and choose a new spot with renewed hope—"This could be it," he'd say—only to be disappointed again. When the sun rose, at six-thirty, casting its bright rays upon the sea, O'Shea raced the boat over to the two anchored traps. He said that he had often had the best luck at dawn; the creatures seemed to rear their heads before vanishing deep below. "Let's see what we got," he said, hauling the nets on board.



"Advantage, Mulloway."

"Anything?" Conway asked.

O'Shea held one of the nets up to his eye, then dropped it in disgust. "Diddly," he said.

"We have to go farther out," O'Shea said the following night. We sped far into the Pacific, leaving the safety of the inlet behind. The hauls remained dismal; after each one, he aimed the boat farther out to sea, saying, "We have to go deeper, that's all."

Conway, who was looking increasingly pale, said, "Haven't we gone out enough?"

"I know the squid are out there," O'Shea said.

The less he found, the harder he seemed to work. He is not a big man, and his childhood illness had left his body somewhat brittle, yet he never slowed down as he pulled the net in with all its weight, then returned it to the water. His fingers were covered in blisters, his clothes were soaked through, and his glasses were stained with salt from the seawater.

"He's a bit of a fanatic, isn't he?" Conway said quietly.

As the cold nights wore on, we worked in a kind of fog. We were getting little sleep during the day, and it became harder to pay attention to the mounds of larval fish, shrimp, krill, and jellyfish; not even the sight of dolphins jumping in the waters nearby relieved the drudgery. At one point, I felt fatigued, and lay down in the forward berth. I could fit only if I bent my knees toward my chest. As I closed my eyes and listened to the waves smashing against the hull, I could hear O'Shea grunting as he pulled in another net and cursing when there was nothing inside.

On yet another night, at around four in the morning, as we pulled in the trawling gear and dropped the contents in the cylindrical tank, Conway shone a flashlight and asked, "What's that?"

O'Shea peered inside, and blinked several times, trying to keep himself awake. "Heaven help us!" he shouted. "It's a fucking squid!" He stared blearily into its eyeball. "It looks like Archie," he told us.

Although the creature was only the size of my thumbnail, I could see it, too—its tentacles, its fins, its eyes, its arms, its bullet-shaped mantle.

“Can I see some I.D.—not that security doesn’t already have you pegged.”

“This could be your dream squid,” Conway said.

“Quick,” O’Shea said. “Let’s drain some of the krill before they crush it.”

He held the cylindrical tank in the air, his arms shaking from exhaustion, as the waves pounded the side of the boat. “Steady!” he yelled. It was hard to see in the darkness—there was no moonlight—and as he poured some of the contents into a strainer, struggling to balance against the violent waves, something happened.

“Where did it go?” O’Shea asked.

“I don’t know,” Conway said. “I can’t see it anymore.”

“Jesus Christ,” O’Shea said.

He grabbed a specially designed tank, which he had purchased expressly for transporting a baby giant squid, and poured the rest of the cylindrical tank’s contents inside it. “Where is the bloody thing?” he said. “Where is it?”

He reached in with his hand, stirring the water frantically. “It has to be here,” he said.

He pulled out one shrimp, then another, holding them under the light.

“It’s gone,” Conway said.

But O’Shea didn’t seem to hear. He sifted through the mounds of plankton, trying to find the baby squid’s microscopic tentacles. At last, he stumbled backward, and put his arms over his head. “It’s a fucking catastrophe,” he said.

He fell back in the captain’s chair, and sat motionless. I tried to think of something to say, but failed. “It was right there,” O’Shea said to himself. “I had it.”

After a while, he tried to drop the traps in the water again, but he no longer seemed able to muster his strength. “I can’t take it anymore,” he said, and disappeared into the forward berth.

That afternoon, O’Shea was sitting on the cabin porch, sipping a glass of whiskey. “Want a spot?” he asked.

“That’s all right,” I said.

He spoke in a whisper, and much more slowly than usual. He said he had pinpointed a new location to search, but I told him I thought I would stay behind and catch up on my work. He looked at me for a long moment. “That’s what always happens,” he said. “People get bored and give up. But I can’t pay any attention to what’s going on around me. I just have to stay focussed.”

He took a sip of his whiskey. “I can already hear the critics saying, ‘The great squid hunter lost his blasted squid again.’ Do you know how it feels when everything goes to custard like this?” He fell silent again, then added, “I’m not going to stop. I’m not going to give up. I don’t care if someone finds the squid first. I’ll *still* go until I find it myself.”

The next morning, when he pushed open the cabin door, he looked despairing. “Nothing,” he said. “Nothing.”

It was the end of the expedition; he had to go back to Auckland to lecture. We loaded up the gear and returned to the city. When we got there, O’Shea went to the aquarium to visit his specimens. In his absence, seventeen squid had died. The employee in whose care he had left them had posted a sign on the tank. It said, “They have a new trick . . . It’s called ‘jumping out of the tank and committing suicide!’ ”

O’Shea checked the temperature and salinity of the water in the tank, and offered the remaining squid some sprat. Then we drove to his house. As he got out of his car, he said, “You may want to take a look at this.”

He led me into the garage, which was cluttered with tools and appliances. He started to clear off an enormous box. “You better put this on,” he said, and handed me a gas mask.

I slipped it over my face, and he opened the top of the bin. Inside was a dead giant squid. “It’s a twenty-seven-foot male,” he said.

The carcass was ivory white and was floating in embalming fluids; its arms were so long that they were bunched together in folds, and its suckers were the size of a child’s fist. “I’m preparing this one for a museum,” he said.

He told me that he had buried one squid corpse in his garden, under a patch of watermelons. Leaning over the box, he picked up the dead animal’s mantle, which was bigger than he was. “That’s the head,” he said.

He turned it over, and I could see a massive, lidless eye staring out at us.

“See here, this is the mouth,” he said, speaking rapidly again. He stuck his fingers inside the white cusp of flesh, revealing a sharp black beak and a serrated tongue. “It’ll cut right through your cartilage,” he said.

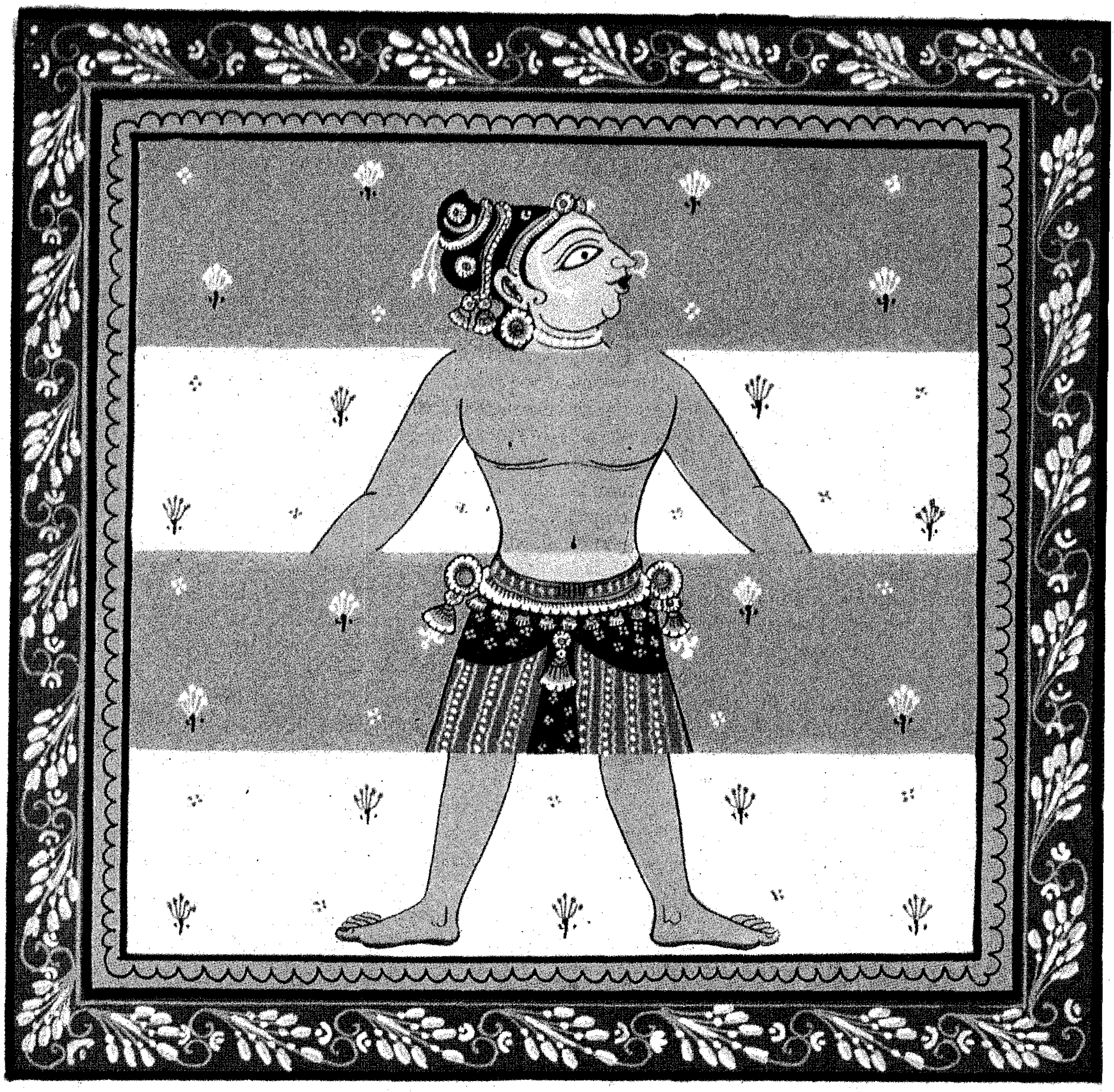
Though O’Shea didn’t have a mask on, he took a deep breath and, with great exertion, lifted half of the creature in his arms. He grabbed a tentacle and started to extend it. “Look at it. They’re fantastic, aren’t they?”

He ran his fingers up and down its limbs, opening and closing its suckers. For a moment, he shut his eyes, as if he were trying to imagine it underwater. Then he said, “The dead one is beautiful, but it’s the live one I want.” ♦

FICTION

HELL-HEAVEN

BY JHUMPA LAHIRI



Pranab Chakraborty wasn't technically my father's younger brother. He was a fellow-Bengali from Calcutta who had washed up on the barren shores of my parents' social life in the early seventies, when they lived in a rented apartment in Central Square and could number their acquaintances on one hand. But I had no real uncles in America, and so I was taught to call him Pranab Kaku. Accordingly, he called my father Shyamal Da, always addressing him in the polite form, and he called my mother Boudi, which is how Bengalis are supposed to address an older brother's wife, instead of using her first name, Aparna. After Pranab Kaku was befriended by my parents, he confessed that on the day we first met him he had followed my mother and me for the better part of an afternoon around the streets of Cambridge, where she and I tended to roam after I got out of school. He had trailed behind us along Massachusetts Avenue, and in and out of the Harvard Coop, where my mother liked to look at discounted housewares. He wandered with us into Harvard Yard, where my mother often sat on the grass on pleasant days and watched the stream of students and professors filing busily along the paths, until, finally, as we were climbing the steps to Widener Library so that I could use the bathroom, he tapped my mother on the shoulder and inquired, in English, if she might be a Bengali. The answer to his question was clear, given that my mother was wearing the red and white bangles unique to Bengali married women, and a common Tangail sari, and had a thick stem of vermillion powder in the center parting of her hair, and the full round face and large dark eyes that are so typical of Bengali women. He noticed the two or three safety pins she wore fastened to the thin gold bangles that were behind the red and white ones, which she would use to replace a missing hook on a blouse or to draw a string through a petticoat at a moment's notice, a practice he associated strictly with his mother and sisters and aunts in Calcutta. Moreover, Pranab Kaku had overheard my mother speaking to me in Bengali, telling me that I couldn't buy an issue of *Archie* at the Coop. But back then, he also confessed, he was so new to America that he took nothing for granted, and doubted even the obvious.

DETAIL: COURTESY FRANCESCO CLEMENTE, "STORY OF MY COUNTRY I" (1990)

My parents and I had lived in Central Square for three years prior to that day; before that, we had lived in Berlin, where I was born and where my father had finished his training in microbiology before accepting a position as a researcher at Mass General, and before Berlin my mother and father had lived in India, where they had been strangers to each other, and where their marriage had been arranged. Central Square is the first place I can recall living, and in my memories of our apartment, in a dark-brown shingled house on Ashburton Place, Pranab Kaku is always there. According to the story he liked to recall often, my mother invited him to accompany us back to our apartment that very afternoon, and prepared tea for the two of them; then, after learning that he had not had a proper Bengali meal in more than three months, she served him the leftover curried mackerel and rice that we had eaten for dinner the night before. He remained into the evening, for a second dinner, after my father got home, and after that he showed up for dinner almost every night, occupying the fourth chair at our square Formica kitchen table, and becoming a part of our family in practice as well as in name.

He was from a wealthy family in Calcutta and had never had to do so much as pour himself a glass of water before moving to America, to study engineering at M.I.T. Life as a graduate student in Boston was a cruel shock, and in his first month he lost nearly twenty pounds. He had arrived in January, in the middle of a snowstorm, and at the end of a week he had packed his bags and gone to Logan, prepared to abandon the opportunity he'd worked toward all his life, only to change his mind at the last minute. He was living on Trowbridge Street in the home of a divorced woman with two young children who were always screaming and crying. He rented a room in the attic and was permitted to use the kitchen only at specified times of the day, and instructed always to wipe down the stove with Windex and a sponge. My parents agreed that it was a terrible situation, and if they'd had a bedroom to spare they would have offered it to him. Instead, they welcomed him to our meals, and opened up our apartment to him at any time, and soon it was there he went between classes and on his days off, always leaving behind some vestige of himself: a nearly finished pack of cigarettes, a newspaper, a piece of mail he had not bothered to open, a sweater he had taken off and forgotten in the course of his stay.

I remember vividly the sound of his exuberant laughter and the sight of his lanky body slouched or sprawled on the dull, mismatched furniture that had come with our apartment. He had a striking face, with a high forehead and a thick mustache, and overgrown, untamed hair that my mother said made him look like the American hippies who were everywhere in those days. His long legs jiggled rapidly up and down wherever he sat, and his elegant hands trembled when he held a cigarette between his fingers, tapping the ashes into a teacup that my mother began to set aside for this exclusive purpose. Though he was a scientist by training, there was nothing rigid or predictable or orderly about him. He always seemed to be starving, walking through the door and announcing that he hadn't had lunch, and then he would eat ravenously, reaching behind my mother to steal cutlets as she was frying them, before she had a chance to set them properly on a plate with red-onion salad. In private, my parents remarked that he was a brilliant student, a star at Jadavpur who had come to M.I.T. with an impressive assistantship, but Pranab Kaku was cavalier about his classes, skipping them with frequency. "These Americans are learning equations I knew at Usha's age," he would complain. He was stunned that my second-grade teacher didn't assign any homework, and that at the age of seven I hadn't yet been taught square roots or the concept of pi.

He appeared without warning, never phoning beforehand but simply knocking on the door the way people did in Calcutta and calling out "Boudi!" as he waited for my mother to let him in. Before we met him, I would return from school and find my mother with her purse in her lap and her trenchcoat on, desperate to escape the apartment where she had spent the day alone. But now I would find her in the kitchen, rolling out dough for *luchis*, which she normally made only on Sundays for my father and me, or putting up new curtains she'd bought at Woolworth's. I did not know, back then, that Pranab Kaku's visits were what my mother looked forward to all day, that she changed into a new sari and combed her hair in anticipation of his arrival, and that she planned, days in advance, the snacks she would serve him with such nonchalance. That she lived for the moment she heard him call out "Boudi!" from the porch, and that she was in a foul humor on the days he didn't materialize.

It must have pleased her that I looked forward to his visits as well. He showed me card tricks and an optical illusion in which he appeared to be severing his own thumb with enormous struggle and strength, and taught me to memorize multiplication tables well before I had to learn them in school. His hobby was photography. He owned an expensive camera that required thought before you pressed the shutter, and I quickly became his favorite subject, round-faced, missing teeth, my thick bangs in need of a trim. They are still the pictures of myself I like best, for they convey that confidence of youth I no longer possess, especially in front of a camera. I remember having to run back and forth in Harvard Yard as he stood with the camera, trying to capture me in motion, or posing on the steps of university buildings and on the street and against the trunks of trees. There is only one photograph in which my mother appears; she is holding me as I sit straddling her lap, her head tilted toward me, her hands pressed to my ears as if to prevent me from hearing something. In that picture, Pranab Kaku's shadow, his two arms raised at angles to hold the camera to his face, hovers in the corner of the frame, his darkened, featureless shape superimposed on one side of my mother's body. It was always the three of us. I was always there when he visited. It would have been inappropriate for my mother to receive him in the apartment alone; this was something that went without saying.

They had in common all the things she and my father did not: a love of music, film, leftist politics, poetry. They were from the same neighborhood in North Calcutta, their family homes within walking distance, the façades familiar to them once the exact locations were described. They knew the same shops, the same bus and tram routes, the same holes-in-the-wall for the best *jelabis* and *moghlai parathas*. My father, on the other hand, came from a suburb twenty miles outside Calcutta, an area that my mother considered the wilderness, and even in her bleakest hours of homesickness she was grateful that my father had at least spared her a life in the stern house of her in-laws, where she would have had to keep her head covered with the end of her sari at all times and use an outhouse that was nothing but a raised platform with a hole, and where, in the rooms, there was not a single painting hanging on the walls. Within a few weeks, Pranab Kaku had brought his reel-to-reel over to our apartment, and he played for my mother medley after medley of songs from the Hindi films of their youth. They were cheerful songs of courtship, which transformed the quiet life in our apartment and transported my mother back to the world she'd left behind in order to marry my father. She and Pranab Kaku would try to recall which scene in which movie the songs were from, who the actors were and what they were wearing. My mother would describe Raj Kapoor and Nargis singing under umbrellas in the rain, or Dev Anand strumming a guitar on the beach in Goa. She and Pranab Kaku would argue passionately about these matters, raising their voices in playful combat, confronting each other in a way she and my father never did.

Because he played the part of a younger brother, she felt free to call him Pranab, whereas she never called my father by his first name. My father was thirty-seven then, nine years older than my mother. Pranab Kaku was twenty-five. My father was monkish by nature, a lover of silence and solitude. He had married my mother to placate his parents; they were willing to accept his desertion as long as he had a wife. He was wedded to his work, his research, and he existed in a shell that neither my mother nor I could penetrate. Conversation was a chore for him; it required an effort he preferred to expend at the lab. He disliked excess in anything, voiced no cravings or needs apart from the frugal elements of his daily routine: cereal and tea in the mornings, a cup of tea after he got home, and two different vegetable dishes every night with dinner. He did not eat with the reckless appetite of Pranab Kaku. My father had a survivor's mentality. From time to time, he liked to remark, in mixed company and often with no relevant provocation, that starving Russians under Stalin had resorted to eating the glue off the back of their wallpaper. One might think that he would have felt slightly jealous, or at the very least suspicious, about the regularity of Pranab Kaku's visits and the effect they had on my mother's behavior and mood. But my guess is that my father was grateful to Pranab Kaku for the companionship he provided, freed from the sense of responsibility he must have felt for forcing her to leave India, and relieved, perhaps, to see her happy for a change.

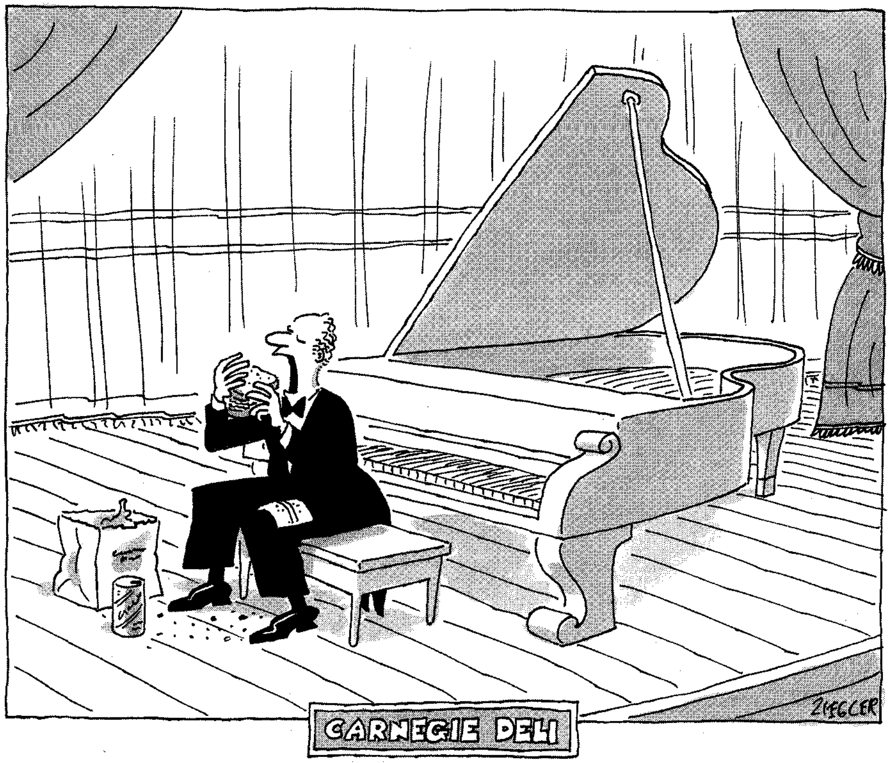
In the summer, Pranab Kaku bought a navy-blue Volkswagen Beetle, and began to take my mother and me for drives through Boston and Cambridge, and soon outside the city, flying down the highway. He would take us to India Tea and Spices in Watertown, and one time he drove us all the way to New Hampshire to look at the mountains. As the weather grew hotter, we started going, once or twice a week, to Walden Pond. My mother always prepared a picnic of hard-boiled eggs and cucumber sandwiches, and talked fondly about the winter picnics of her youth, grand expeditions with fifty of her relatives, all taking the train into the West Bengal countryside. Pranab Kaku listened to these stories with interest, absorbing the vanishing details of her past. He did not turn a deaf ear to her nostalgia, like my father, or listen uncomprehending, like me. At Walden Pond, Pranab Kaku would coax my mother through the woods, and lead her down the steep slope to the water's edge. She would unpack the picnic things and sit and watch us as we swam. His chest was matted with thick dark hair, all the way to his waist. He was an odd sight, with his pole-thin legs and a small, flaccid belly, like an otherwise svelte woman who has had a baby and not bothered to tone her abdomen. "You're making me fat, Boudi," he would complain after gorging himself on my mother's cooking. He swam noisily, clumsily, his head always above the water; he didn't know how to blow bubbles or hold his breath, as I had learned in swimming class. Wherever we went, any stranger would have naturally assumed that Pranab Kaku was my father, that my mother was his wife.

It is clear to me now that my mother was in love with him. He wooed her as no other man had, with the innocent affection of a brother-in-law. In my mind, he was just a family member, a cross between an uncle and a much older brother, for in certain respects my parents sheltered and cared for him in much the same way they cared for me. He was respectful of my father, always seeking his advice about making a life in the West, about setting up a bank account and getting a job, and deferring to his opinions about Kissinger and Watergate. Occasionally, my mother would tease him about women, asking about female Indian students at M.I.T., or showing him pictures of her younger cousins in India. "What do you think of her?" she would ask. "Isn't she pretty?" She knew that she could never have Pranab Kaku for herself, and I suppose it was her attempt to keep him in the family. But, most important, in the beginning he was totally dependent on her, needing her for those months in a way my father never did in the whole history of their marriage. He brought to my mother the first and, I suspect, the only pure happiness she ever felt. I don't think even my birth made her as happy. I was evidence of her marriage to my father, an assumed consequence of the life she had been raised to lead. But Pranab Kaku was different. He was the one totally unanticipated pleasure in her life.

In the fall of 1974, Pranab Kaku met a student at Radcliffe named Deborah, an American, and she began to accompany him to our house. I called Deborah by her first name, as my parents did, but Pranab Kaku taught her to call my father Shyamal Da and my mother Boudi, something with which Deborah gladly complied. Before they came to dinner for the first time, I asked my mother, as she was straightening up the living room, if I ought to address her as Deborah Kakima, turning her into an aunt as I had turned Pranab into an uncle. "What's the point?" my mother said, looking back at me sharply. "In a few weeks, the fun will be over and she'll leave him." And yet Deborah remained by his side, attending the weekend parties that Pranab Kaku and my parents were becoming more involved with, gatherings that were exclusively Bengali with the exception of her. Deborah was very tall, taller than both my parents and nearly as tall as Pranab Kaku. She wore her long brass-colored hair center-parted, as my mother did, but it was gathered into a low ponytail instead of a braid, or it spilled messily over her shoulders and down her back in a way that my mother considered indecent. She wore small silver spectacles and not a trace of makeup, and she studied philosophy. I found her utterly beautiful, but according to my mother she had spots on her face, and her hips were too small.

For a while, Pranab Kaku still showed up once a week for dinner on his own, mostly asking my mother what she thought of Deborah. He sought her approval, telling her that Deborah was the daughter of professors at Boston College, that her father published poetry, and that both her parents had Ph.D.s. When he wasn't around, my mother complained about Deborah's visits, about having to make the food less spicy even though Deborah said she liked spicy food, and feeling embarrassed to put a fried fish head in the dal. Pranab Kaku taught Deborah to say *khub bhalo* and *aacha* and to pick up certain foods with her fingers instead of with a fork. Sometimes they ended up feeding each other, allowing their fingers to linger in each other's mouth, causing my parents to look down at their plates and wait for the moment to pass. At larger gatherings, they kissed and held hands in front of everyone, and when they were out of earshot my mother would talk to the other Bengali women. "He used to be so different. I don't understand how a person can change so suddenly. It's just hell-heaven, the difference," she would say, always using the English words for her self-concocted, backward metaphor.

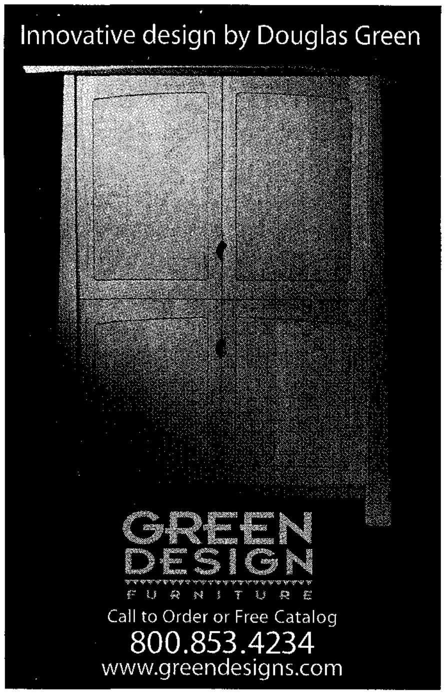
The more my mother began to resent Deborah's visits, the more I began to anticipate them. I fell in love with Deborah, the way young girls often fall in love with women who are not their mothers. I loved her serene gray eyes, the ponchos and denim wrap skirts and sandals she wore, her straight hair that she let me manipulate into all sorts of silly styles. I longed for her casual appearance; my mother insisted whenever there was a gathering that I wear one of my ankle-length, faintly Victorian dresses, which she referred to as maxis, and have party hair, which meant taking a strand from either side of my head and joining them with a barrette at the back. At parties, Deborah would, eventually, politely slip



away, much to the relief of the Bengali women with whom she was expected to carry on a conversation, and she would play with me. I was older than all my parents' friends' children, but with Deborah I had a companion. She knew all about the books I read, about Pippi Longstocking and Anne of Green Gables. She gave me the sorts of gifts my parents had neither the money nor the inspiration to buy: a large book of Grimms' fairy tales with watercolor illustrations on thick, silken pages, wooden puppets with hair fashioned from yarn. She told me about her family, three older sisters and two brothers, the youngest of whom was closer to my age than to hers. Once, after visiting her parents, she brought back three Nancy Drews, her name written in a girlish hand at the top of the first page, and an old toy she'd had, a small paper theatre set with interchangeable backdrops, the exterior of a castle and a ballroom and an open field. Deborah and I spoke freely in English, a language in which, by that age, I expressed myself more easily than Bengali, which I was required to speak at home. Sometimes she asked me how to say this or that in Bengali; once, she asked me what *asobbho* meant. I hesitated, then told her it was what my mother called me if I had done something extremely naughty, and Deborah's face clouded. I felt protective of her, aware that she was unwanted, that she was resented, aware of the nasty things people said.

Outings in the Volkswagen now involved the four of us, Deborah in the front, her hand over Pranab Kaku's while it rested on the gearshift, my mother and I in the back. Soon, my mother began coming up with reasons to excuse herself, headaches and incipient colds, and so I became part of a new triangle. To my surprise, my mother allowed me to go with them, to the Museum of Fine Arts and the Public Garden and the aquarium. She was waiting for the affair to end, for Deborah to break Pranab Kaku's heart and for him to return to us, scarred and penitent. I saw no sign of their relationship foundering. Their open affection for each other, their easily expressed happiness, was a new and romantic thing to me. Having me in the back seat allowed Pranab Kaku and Deborah to practice for the future, to try on the idea of a family of their own. Countless photographs were taken of me and Deborah, of me sitting on Deborah's lap, holding her hand, kissing her on the cheek. We exchanged what I believed were secret smiles, and in those moments I felt that she understood me better than anyone else in the world. Anyone would have said that Deborah would make an excellent mother one day. But my mother refused to acknowledge such a thing. I did not know at the time that my mother allowed me to go off with Pranab Kaku and Deborah because she was pregnant for the fifth time since my birth, and was so sick and exhausted and fearful of losing another baby that she slept most of the day. After ten weeks, she miscarried once again, and was advised by her doctor to stop trying.

By summer, there was a diamond on Deborah's left hand, something my mother had never been given. Because his own family lived so far away, Pranab Kaku came to the house alone one day, to ask for my parents' blessing before giving her the ring. He showed us the box, opening it and taking out the diamond nestled inside. "I want to see how it looks on someone," he said, urging my mother to try it on, but she refused. I was the one who stuck out my hand, feeling the weight of the ring suspended at the base of my finger. Then he asked for a second thing: he wanted my parents to write to his parents, saying that they had met Deborah and that they thought highly of her. He was nervous, naturally, about telling his family that he intended to marry an American girl. He had told his parents all about us, and at one point my parents had received a letter from them, expressing appreciation for taking such good care of their son and for giving him a proper home in America. "It needn't be long," Pranab Kaku said. "Just a few lines. They'll accept it more easily if it comes from you." My father thought neither ill nor well of Deborah, never commenting or criticizing as my mother did, but he assured Pranab Kaku that a letter of endorsement would be on its way to Calcutta by the end of the week. My mother nodded her assent, but the following day I saw the teacup Pranab Kaku had used all this time as an ashtray in the kitchen garbage can, in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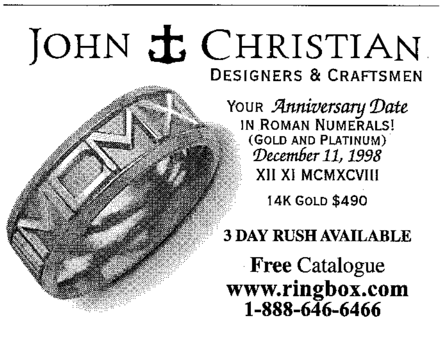
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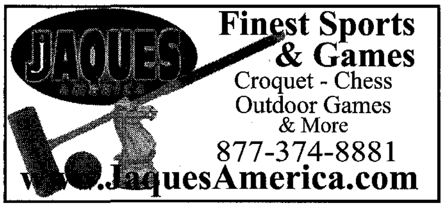
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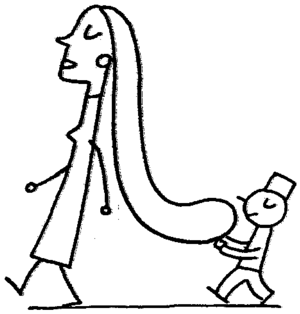
pieces, and three Band-Aids taped to my mother's hand.

Pranab Kaku's parents were horrified by the thought of their only son marrying an American woman, and a few weeks later our telephone rang in the middle of the night: it was Mr. Chakraborty telling my father that they could not possibly bless such a marriage, that it was out of the question, that if Pranab Kaku dared to marry Deborah he would no longer acknowledge him as a son. Then his wife got on the phone, asking to speak to my mother, and attacked her as if they were intimate, blaming my mother for allowing the affair to develop. She said that they had already chosen a wife for him in Calcutta, that he'd left for America with the understanding that he'd go back after he had finished his studies, and marry this girl. They had bought the neighboring flat in their building for Pranab and his betrothed, and it was sitting empty, waiting for his return. "We thought we could trust you, and yet you have betrayed us so deeply," his mother said, taking out her anger on a stranger in a way she could not with her son. "Is this what happens to people in America?" For Pranab Kaku's sake, my mother defended the engagement, telling his mother that Deborah was a polite girl from a decent family. Pranab Kaku's parents pleaded with mine to talk him out of the engagement, but my father refused, deciding that it was not their place to get embroiled in a situation that had nothing to do with them. "We are not his parents," he told my mother. "We can tell him they don't approve but nothing more." And so my parents told Pranab Kaku nothing about how his parents had berated them, and blamed them, and threatened to disown Pranab Kaku, only that they had refused to give him their blessing. In the face of this refusal, Pranab Kaku shrugged. "I don't care. Not everyone can be as open-minded as you," he told my parents. "Your blessing is blessing enough."

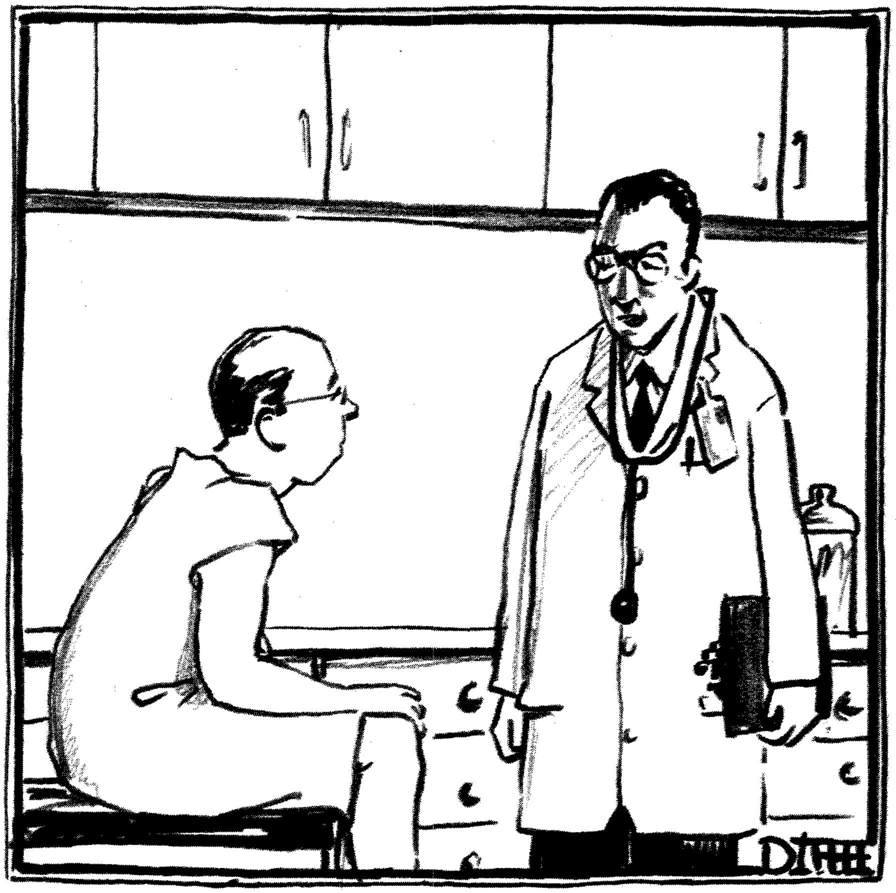
After the engagement, Pranab Kaku and Deborah began drifting out of our lives. They moved in together, to an apartment in Boston, in the South End, a part of the city my parents considered unsafe. We moved as well, to a house in Natick. Though my parents had bought the house, they occupied it as if they were still tenants, touching up scuff marks with leftover paint and reluctant to put holes in the walls, and every afternoon when the sun shone through the living-room window my mother closed the blinds so that our new furniture would not fade. A few weeks before the wedding, my parents invited Pranab Kaku to the house alone, and my mother prepared a special meal to mark the end of his bachelorhood. It would be the only Bengali aspect of the wedding; the rest of it would be strictly American, with a cake and a minister and Deborah in a long white dress and veil. There is a photograph of the dinner, taken by my father, the only picture, to my knowledge, in which my mother and Pranab Kaku appear together. The picture is slightly blurry; I remember Pranab Kaku explaining to my father how to work the camera, and so he is captured looking up from the kitchen table and the elaborate array of food my mother had prepared in his honor, his mouth open, his long arm outstretched and his finger pointing, instructing my father how to read the light meter or some such thing. My mother stands beside him, one hand placed on top of his head in a gesture of blessing, the first and last time she was to touch him in her life. "She will leave him," my mother told her friends afterward. "He is throwing his life away."

The wedding was at a church in Ipswich, with a reception at a country club. It was going to be a small ceremony, which my parents took to mean one or two hundred people as opposed to three or four hundred. My mother was shocked that fewer than thirty people had been invited, and she was more perplexed than honored that, of all the Bengalis Pranab Kaku knew by then, we were the only ones on the list. At the wedding, we sat, like the other guests, first on the hard wooden pews of the church and then at a long table that had been set up for lunch.



Though we were the closest thing Pranab Kaku had to a family that day, we were not included in the group photographs that were taken on the grounds of the country club, with Deborah's parents and grandparents and her many siblings, and neither my mother nor my father got up to make a toast. My mother did not appreciate the fact that Deborah had made sure that my parents, who did not eat beef, were given fish instead of filet mignon like everyone else. She kept speaking in Bengali, complaining about the formality of the proceedings, and the fact that Pranab Kaku, wearing a tuxedo, barely said a word to us because he was too busy leaning over the shoulders of his new American in-laws as he circled the table. As usual, my father said nothing in response to my mother's commentary, quietly and methodically working though his meal, his fork and knife occasionally squeaking against the surface of the china, because he was accustomed to eating with his hands. He cleared his plate and then my mother's, for she had pronounced the food inedible, and then he announced that he had overeaten and had a stomach ache. The only time my mother forced a smile was when Deborah appeared behind her chair, kissing her on the cheek and asking if we were enjoying ourselves. When the dancing started, my parents remained at the table, drinking tea, and after two or three songs they decided that it was time for us to go home, my mother shooting me looks to that effect across the room, where I was dancing in a circle with Pranab Kaku and Deborah and the other children at the wedding. I wanted to stay, and when, reluctantly, I walked over to where my parents sat Deborah followed me. "Boudi, let Usha stay. She's having such a good time," she said to my mother. "Lots of people will be heading back your way, someone can drop her off in a little while." But my mother said no, I had had plenty of fun already, and forced me to put on my coat over my long puff-sleeved dress. As we drove home from the wedding I told my mother, for the first but not the last time in my life, that I hated her.

The following year, we received a birth announcement from the Chakrabortys, a picture of twin girls, which my mother did not paste into an album or display on the refrigerator



"It's your ear, nose, and throat."

door. The girls were named Srabani and Sabitri, but were called Bonny and Sara. Apart from a thank-you card for our wedding gift, it was their only communication; we were not invited to the new house in Marblehead, bought after Pranab Kaku got a high-paying job at Stone & Webster. For a while, my parents and their friends continued to invite the Chakrabortys to gatherings, but because they never came, or left after staying only an hour, the invitations stopped. Their absences were attributed, by my parents and their circle, to Deborah, and it was universally agreed that she had stripped Pranab Kaku not only of his origins but of his independence. She was the enemy, he was her prey, and their example was invoked as a warning, and as vindication, that mixed marriages were a doomed enterprise. Occasionally, they surprised everyone, appearing at a *pujo* for a few hours with their two identical little girls who barely looked Bengali and spoke only English and were being raised so differently from me and most of the other children. They were not taken to Calcutta every summer, they did not have parents who were clinging to another way of life and exhorting their children to do the same. Because of Deborah, they were exempt from all that, and for this reason I envied them. "Usha, look at you, all grown up and so pretty," Deborah would say whenever she saw me, rekindling, if only for a minute, our bond of years before. She had cut off her beautiful long hair by then, and had a bob. "I bet you'll be old enough to babysit soon," she would say. "I'll call you—the girls would love that." But she never did.

I began to grow out of my girlhood, entering middle school and developing crushes on the American boys in my class. The crushes amounted to nothing; in spite of Deborah's compliments, I was always overlooked at that age. But my mother must have picked up on something, for she forbade me to attend the dances that were held the last Friday of every month in the school cafeteria, and it was an unspoken law that I was not allowed to date. "Don't think you'll get away with marrying an American, the way Pranab Kaku did," she would say from time to time. I was thirteen, the thought of marriage irrelevant to my life. Still, her words upset me, and I felt her grip on me tighten. She would fly into a rage when I told her I wanted to start wearing a bra, or if I wanted to go to Harvard Square with a friend. In the middle of our arguments, she often conjured Deborah as her antithesis, the sort of woman she refused to be. "If *she* were your mother, she would let you do whatever you wanted, because she wouldn't care. Is that what you want, Usha, a mother who doesn't care?" When I began menstruating, the summer before I started ninth grade, my mother gave me a speech, telling me that I was to let no boy touch me, and then she asked if I knew how a woman became pregnant. I told her what I had been taught in science, about the sperm fertilizing the egg, and then she asked if I knew how, exactly, that happened. I saw the terror in her eyes and so, though I knew that aspect of procreation as well, I lied, and told her it hadn't been explained to us.

I began keeping other secrets from her, evading her with the aid of my friends. I told her I was sleeping over at a friend's when really I went to parties, drinking beer and allowing boys to kiss me and fondle my breasts and press their erections against my hip as we lay groping on a sofa or the back seat of a car. I began to pity my mother; the older I got, the more I saw what a desolate life she led. She had never worked, and during the day she watched soap operas to pass the time. Her only job, every day, was to clean and cook for my father and me. We rarely went to restaurants, my father always pointing out, even in cheap ones, how expensive they were compared with eating at home. When my mother complained to him about how much she hated life in the suburbs and how lonely she felt, he said nothing to placate her. "If you are so unhappy, go back to Calcutta," he would offer, making it clear that their separation would not affect him one way or the other. I began to take my cues from my father in dealing with her, isolating her doubly. When she screamed at me for talking too long on the telephone, or for staying too long in my room, I learned to scream back, telling her that she was pathetic, that she knew nothing about me, and it was clear to us both that I had stopped needing her, definitively and abruptly, just as Pranab Kaku had.

Then, the year before I went off to college, my parents and I were invited to the Chakrabortys' home for Thanksgiving. We were not the only guests from my parents' old Cambridge crowd; it turned out that Pranab Kaku and Deborah wanted to have a sort of reunion of all the people they had been friendly with back then. Normally, my parents did not celebrate Thanksgiving; the ritual of a large sit-down dinner and the foods that one was supposed to eat was lost on them. They treated it as if it were Memorial Day or Veterans Day—just another holiday in the American year. But we drove out to Marblehead, to an impressive stone-faced house with a semicircular gravel driveway clogged with cars. The house was a short walk from the ocean; on our way, we had driven by the harbor overlooking the cold, glittering Atlantic, and when we stepped out of the car we were greeted by the sound of gulls and waves. Most of the living-room furniture had been moved to the basement, and extra tables joined to the main one to form a giant U. They were covered with tablecloths, set with white plates and silverware, and had centerpieces of gourds. I was struck by the toys and dolls that were everywhere, dogs that shed long yellow hairs on everything, all the photographs of Bonny and Sara and Deborah decorating the walls, still more plastering the refrigerator door. Food was being prepared when we arrived, something my mother always frowned upon, the kitchen a chaos of people and smells and enormous dirtied bowls.

Deborah's family, whom we remembered dimly from the wedding, was there, her parents and her brothers and sisters and their husbands and wives and boyfriends and babies. Her sisters were in their thirties, but, like Deborah, they could have been mistaken for college students, wearing jeans and clogs and fisherman sweaters, and her brother Matty, with whom I had danced in a circle at the wedding, was now a freshman at Amherst, with wide-set green eyes and wispy brown hair and a complexion that reddened easily. As soon as I saw Deborah's siblings, joking with one another as they chopped and stirred things in the kitchen, I was furious with my mother for making a scene before we left the house and forcing me to wear a shalwar kameez. I knew they assumed, from my clothing, that I had more in common with the other Bengalis than with them. But Deborah insisted on including me, setting me to work peeling apples with Matty, and out of my parents' sight I was given beer to drink. When the meal was ready, we were told where to sit, in an alternating boy-girl formation that made the Bengalis uncomfortable. Bottles of wine were lined up on the table. Two turkeys were brought out, one stuffed with sausage and one without. My mouth watered at the food, but I knew that afterward, on our way home, my mother would complain that it was all tasteless and bland. "Impossible," my mother said, shaking her hand over the top of her glass when someone tried to pour her a little wine.

Deborah's father, Gene, got up to say grace, and asked everyone at the table to join hands. He bowed his head and closed his eyes. "Dear Lord, we thank you today for the food we are about to receive," he began. My parents were seated next to each other, and I was stunned to see that they complied, that my father's brown fingers lightly clasped my mother's pale ones. I noticed Matty seated on the other side of the room, and saw him glancing at me as his father spoke. After the chorus of amens, Gene raised his glass and said, "Forgive me, but I never thought I'd have the opportunity to say this: Here's to Thanksgiving with the Indians." Only a few people laughed at the joke.

Then Pranab Kaku stood up and thanked everyone for coming. He was relaxed from alcohol, his once wiry body beginning to thicken. He started to talk sentimentally about his early days in Cambridge, and then suddenly he recounted the story of meeting me and my mother for the first time, telling the guests about how he had followed us that afternoon. The people who did not know us laughed, amused by the description of the encounter, and by Pranab Kaku's desperation. He walked around the room

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to where my mother was sitting and draped a lanky arm around her shoulder, forcing her, for a brief moment, to stand up. "This woman," he declared, pulling her close to his side, "this woman hosted my first real Thanksgiving in America. It might have been an afternoon in May, but that first meal at Boudi's table was Thanksgiving to me. If it weren't for that meal, I would have gone back to Calcutta." My mother looked away, embarrassed. She was thirty-eight, already going gray, and she looked closer to my father's age than to Pranab Kaku's; regardless of his waistline, he retained his handsome, carefree looks. Pranab Kaku went back to his place at the head of the table, next to Deborah, and concluded, "And if that had been the case I'd have never met you, my darling," and he kissed her on the mouth in front of everyone, to much applause, as if it were their wedding day all over again.

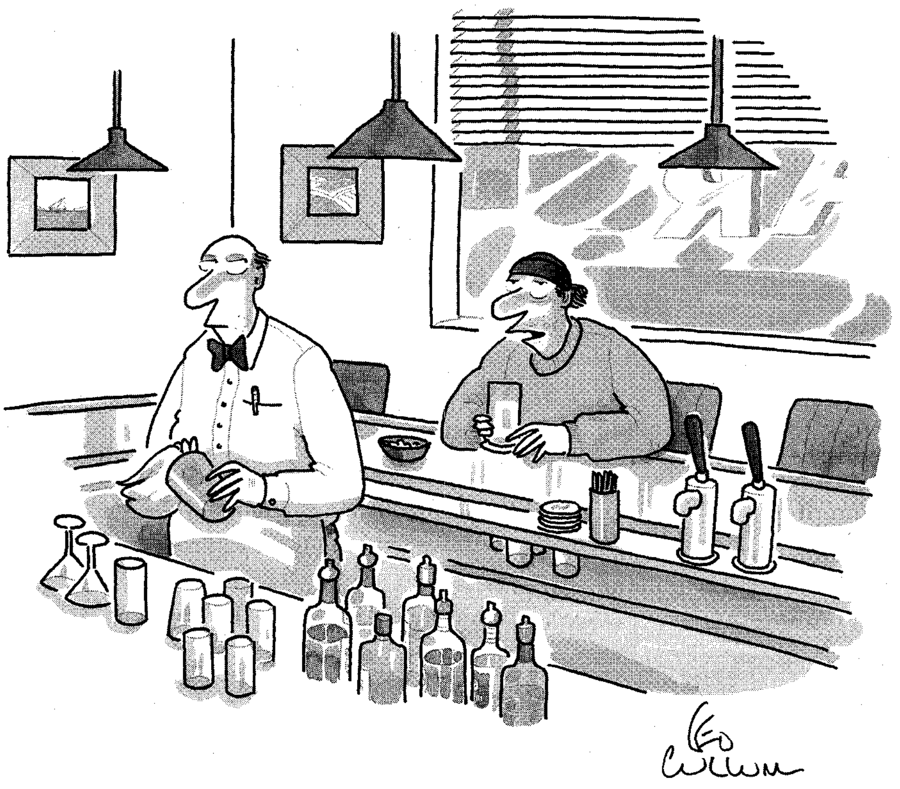
After the turkey, smaller forks were distributed and orders were taken for three different kinds of pie, written on small pads by Deborah's sisters, as if they were waitresses. After dessert, the dogs needed to go out, and Pranab Kaku volunteered to take them. "How about a walk on the beach?" he suggested, and Deborah's side of the family agreed that that was an excellent idea. None of the Bengalis wanted to go, preferring to sit with their tea and cluster together, at last, at one end of the room, speaking freely after the forced chitchat with the Americans during the meal. Matty came over and sat in the chair beside me that was now empty, encouraging me to join the walk. When I hesitated, pointing to my inappropriate clothes and shoes but also aware of my mother's silent fury at the sight of us together, he said, "I'm sure Deb can lend you something." So I went upstairs, where Deborah gave me a pair of her jeans and a thick sweater and some sneakers, so that I looked like her and her sisters.

She sat on the edge of her bed, watching me change, as if we were girlfriends, and she asked if I had a boyfriend. When I told her no, she said, "Matty thinks you're cute."

"He told you?"

"No, but I can tell."

As I walked back downstairs, emboldened by this information, in the jeans I'd had to roll up and in which I felt finally like myself, I noticed my mother lift her eyes from her teacup and stare at me, but she said nothing, and off I went, with Pranab Kaku and his dogs and his in-laws, along a road and then down some steep wooden steps to the water. Deborah and one of her sisters stayed behind, to begin the cleanup and see to the needs of those who remained. Initially, we all walked together, in a single row across the sand, but then I noticed Matty hanging back, and so the two of us trailed behind, the distance between us and the others increasing. We began flirting, talking of things I no longer remember, and eventually we wandered into a rocky inlet and Matty fished a joint out of his pocket. We turned our backs to the wind and smoked it, our cold fingers touching in the process, our lips pressed to the same damp section of the rolling paper. At first I didn't feel any effect, but then, listening to him talk about the band he was in, I was aware that his voice sounded miles away, and that I had the urge to laugh, even though what he was saying was not terribly funny. It felt as if we were apart from the group for hours, but when we wandered back to the sand we could still see them, walking out onto a rocky promontory to watch the sun set. It was dark by the time we all headed back to the house, and I dreaded seeing my parents while I was still high. But when we got there Deborah told me that my parents, feeling tired, had left, agreeing to let someone drive me home later. A fire had been lit and I was told to relax and have more pie as the leftovers were put away and the living room slowly put back in order. Of course, it was Matty who drove me home, and sitting in my parents' driveway I kissed him, at once thrilled and terrified that my mother might walk onto the lawn in her nightgown and discover us. I gave Matty my phone number, and for a few weeks I thought of him constantly, and hoped foolishly that he would call.



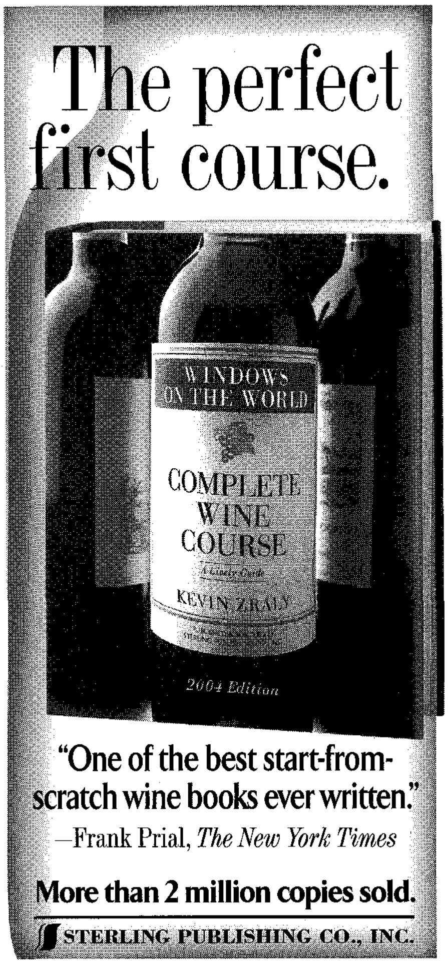
"Do you think terrorists could ever poison the vodka supply?"

In the end, my mother was right, and fourteen years after that Thanksgiving, after twenty-three years of marriage, Pranab Kaku and Deborah got divorced. It was he who had strayed, falling in love with a married Bengali woman, destroying two families in the process. The other woman was someone my parents knew, though not very well. Deborah was in her forties by then, Bonny and Sara away at college. In her shock and grief, it was my mother whom Deborah turned to, calling and weeping into the phone. Somehow, through all the years, she had continued to regard us as quasi in-laws, sending flowers when my grandparents died, and giving me a compact edition of the O.E.D. as a college-graduation present. "You knew him so well. How could he do something like this?" Deborah asked my mother. And then, "Did you know anything about it?" My mother answered truthfully that she did not. Their hearts had been broken by the same man, only my mother's had long ago mended, and in an odd way, as my parents approached their old age, she and my father had grown fond of each other, out of habit if nothing else. I believe my absence from the house, once I left for college, had something to do with this, because over the years, when I visited, I noticed a warmth between my parents that had not been there before, a quiet teasing, a solidarity, a concern when one of them fell ill. My mother and I had also made peace; she had accepted the fact that I was not only her daughter but a child of America as well. Slowly, she accepted that I dated one American man, and then another, and then yet another, that I slept with them, and even that I lived with one though we were not married. She welcomed my boyfriends into our home and when things didn't work out she told me I would find someone better. After years of being idle, she decided, when she turned fifty, to get a degree in library science at a nearby university.

On the phone, Deborah admitted something that surprised my mother: that all these years she had felt hopelessly shut out of a part of Pranab Kaku's life. "I was so horribly jealous of you back then, for knowing him, understanding him in a way I never could. He turned his back on his family, on all of you, really, but I still felt threatened. I could never get over that." She told my mother that she had tried, for years, to get Pranab Kaku to reconcile with his parents, and that she had also encouraged him to maintain ties with other Bengalis, but he had resisted. It had been Deborah's idea to invite us to their Thanksgiving; ironically, the other woman had been there, too. "I hope you don't blame me for taking him away from your lives, Boudi. I always worried that you did."

My mother assured Deborah that she blamed her for nothing. She confessed nothing to Deborah about her own jealousy of decades before, only that she was sorry for what had happened, that it was a sad and terrible thing for their family. She did not tell Deborah that a few weeks after Pranab Kaku's wedding, while I was at a Girl Scout meeting and my father was at work, she had gone through the house, gathering up all the safety pins that lurked in drawers and tins, and adding them to the few fastened to her bracelets. When she'd found enough, she pinned them to her sari one by one, attaching the front piece to the layer of material underneath, so that no one would be able to pull the garment off her body. Then she took a can of lighter fluid and a box of kitchen matches and stepped outside, into our chilly back yard, which was full of leaves needing to be raked. Over her sari she was wearing a knee-length lilac trenchcoat, and to any neighbor she must have looked as though she'd simply stepped out for some fresh air. She opened up the coat and removed the tip from the can of lighter fluid and doused herself, then buttoned and belted the coat. She walked over to the garbage barrel behind our house and disposed of the fluid, then returned to the middle of the yard with the box of matches in her coat pocket. For nearly an hour she stood there, looking at our house, trying to work up the courage to strike a match. It was not I who saved her, or my father, but our next-door neighbor, Mrs. Holcomb, with whom my mother had never been particularly friendly. She came out to rake the leaves in her yard, calling out to my mother and remarking how beautiful the sunset was. "I see you've been admiring it for a while now," she said. My mother agreed, and then she went back into the house. By the time my father and I came home in the early evening, she was in the kitchen boiling rice for our dinner, as if it were any other day.

My mother told Deborah none of this. It was to me that she confessed, after my own heart was broken by a man I'd hoped to marry. ♦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BUFFALO TIM

The child is father to the dad.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

Father's Day has always been a difficult time for me. It isn't that I don't have a father; rather, it's that, every year at about this time, from the sky descends a giant fixed template of American Dad-dom, which, alas, fits my father very poorly. We've never been to a ballgame together. We've never tossed the old pill around in the back yard. We've never had a couple of beers, or even one beer. We've never been hunting or fishing or camping. We've never worked on cars, or done anything else involving a tool kit. He has never offered me homespun advice that was no less true because it took the form of familiar bromides. He is not, in truth, even a regular guy. Although he is a member of the Greatest Generation, he spent the Second World War stationed in New Guinea and the Philippines in an encryption unit, which doesn't fit the model of paternal martial valor preferred by rueful unmilitary baby-boom sons.

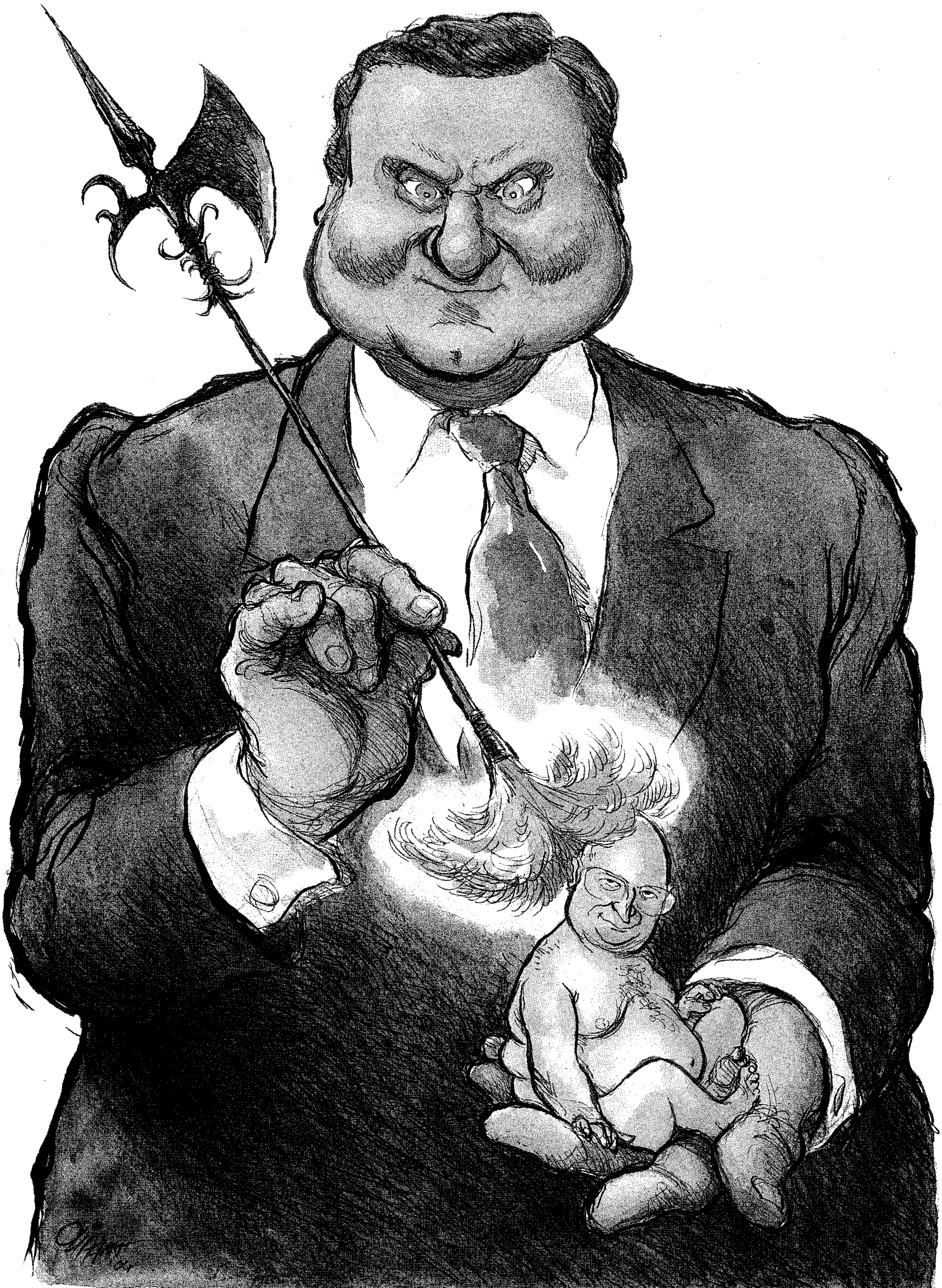
As father and son, we would do things like drive around the environs of New Orleans on Sundays, carrying a list that he had somehow obtained of the trees with the greatest girths, and double-check that the girths were actually what the list said they were, which often involved sneaking into people's back yards. Whatever category that fell into, most of the rest of what we did together fell into it, too. So you can see why Father's Day for me is what Valentine's Day is for someone who's just been jilted.

Tim Russert, the host of "Meet the Press," and one of the three or four most lordly figures in Washington journalism, doesn't have this problem. He's celebrating Father's Day this year by publishing a fond memoir called "Big Russ & Me" (Miramax; $22.95), which presents his own dad as a holiday paragon. As no one who watches "Meet the Press" can avoid knowing, Russert, who is fifty-four, grew up in Buffalo, New York, in a blue-collar Irish-Catholic enclave on the south side of town. His father, now eighty, was a high-school dropout, a veteran whose home away from home was the American Legion hall, and a family man so devoted that he worked two jobs, as a foreman in the city sanitation department and as a newspaper deliveryman, in order to keep (lots of) food on the table and send his four children to parochial school. He is a fount of plainspoken wisdom, who, to this day, provides Russert with guidance that is just as unerring in the realm of political journalism as it was when directed at Tim's summer job collecting garbage.

Russert absolutely rules Sunday-morning Washington television journalism: he's crushing his competitors—Bob Schieffer, of CBS's "Face the Nation," and George Stephanopoulos, of ABC's "This Week"—in the Nielsen ratings. When there's a monstrous "get" to be got, such as, back in February, an interview with President Bush in the Oval Office, Russert obtains it. His hour-long interviews with the Democratic Presidential candidates have ranked just behind the primaries this year as crucial tests for them. Since Bob Woodward publishes a book only every year or two, week in and week out Russert probably holds the distinction of being the journalist whose work Washington talks about most obsessively. The leading figures in both Washington journalism and television journalism are more than just solitary seekers and tellers of truth about the holders of governmental power. Russert performs a journalistic function on "Meet the Press" in the sense that he peppers officials with questions, but even if you don't live in Washington it's obvious that he's a bigger deal than most of his guests. His role is that of a luminous fixed star in political space, around whom other bodies must orient themselves.

"Big Russ & Me" is not so much a self-examination, or even a dad-examination—very little in it could be honestly described as interesting—as it is a highly effective extension of the Russert brand. The book is written with Bill Novak, the celebrity ghostwriter, who is credited as "full partner." The brand wouldn't be so successful if it weren't genuinely appealing, and Russert in these pages is characteristically forthright, unpretentious, respectful, and values-laden. And Big Russ himself functions less as a vivid character in a book than as an enhancer of his son's mystique. Big Russ, it turns out, is a name conferred by Tim Russert on his father, not something that his friends called him. The senior Russert's real name is—Tim Russert. At least nominally, he's an invention of his son. Big Russ fades out somewhat as the book goes on, but every appearance, while presented as being illustrative of his good qualities (no filial ambivalence here!), literarily performs the function of making Tim look good, by reassuring us that he's permanently connected to a father lode of realness.

"Hardly a day goes by when I don't remember or rely on something that Big Russ taught me," Russert writes. Big Russ's credo entails simplicity, thrift, hard work, and moral clarity. He taught Russert how to shake hands firmly and how to tie a necktie, and conferred on him the ideal-typical nineteen-fifties American boyhood. Tim watched "Howdy



Tim Russert would not be such a big star on the Sunday-morning talk-show circuit if he crossed the line into nastiness.

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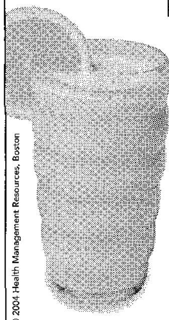

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Doody" and "Gunsmoke" and "I Love Lucy," trudged to school in the snow, worshipped baseball, minded the priests and nuns, and ate hearty: the butcher, he fondly recalls, had a display case that perfectly evoked Buffalo's version of multiculturalism and good health, full of "pork neck bone, smoked pork neck bone, jellied tongue, Polish bacon, slab bacon, double smoked hunter bacon, German-style wieners, Italian sausage, pork roll sausage, hot or mild beef sausage, barley sausage, beer sausage, double smoked hunter bacon . . . chopped ham, smoked hocks, turkey gizzards, smoked turkey parts, chicken feet, chicken liver, chicken fat, fresh ox tails, and ribs of every type." Buffalo itself had "a powerful, simple strength."

As Russert gets older and more successful—as when he first appears on "Meet the Press," as a panelist, in 1990—Big Russ regularly pops up to reiterate his teachings. " 'Just be yourself,' Big Russ said. 'Pretend you're talking to me. Don't get too fancy. Don't talk that Washington talk. You've got to talk so people can understand you. Ask questions that my buddies at the post would want to know about.' " In particular, Big Russ displays a magic touch by taking perilous moments at which his son might reveal himself to have become just another privileged jerk and turning them into pure Buffalo gold. Russert goes to dinner at Spago, in Los Angeles, with Maria Shriver, and Big Russ comes along and tries to order a Genessee or a Labatt's. Russert offers Big Russ the fancy car of his choice as a birthday present, and Big Russ picks a Ford Crown Victoria. Earlier, Russert's decision not to fight in Vietnam doesn't put him in the category of contemptible baby boomers, because he is merely taking Big Russ's advice. ("For this war, right now, if you have a chance to get a college education, take it.") Big Russ is a kind of personal amulet guaranteeing that Russert will always retain his common touch, a matter not lacking in relevance to Russert's career: "Big Russ is the least expensive and most accurate focus group around, which is why I call him every Monday morning for his reaction to Sunday's show."

Whether or not at Big Russ's direction, Russert has reinvented the Sunday-morning interview format. His signature moves are relentlessly aggressive questioning and, related to that, frequently cutting away to a screen that displays a quotation, sometimes from the guest (in which case it's often something that contradicts the guest's present position), sometimes from a political rival or a journalist (in which case it's often an attack to which Russert asks the guest to respond). The text blocks, and Russert's own questions, which seem to be written down on a piece of paper that he brings onto the set, bespeak both careful preparation, if not by Russert himself then at least by his staff, and a subtle elevation in the status of the Sunday-morning news-talk host. Having done so much homework confers on Russert a dutiful-schoolboy aspect, and he always maintains a direct, unpreening manner. Still, his method puts him in quite a different role from that of "Meet the Press" hosts and panelists in the old days, who questioned officials respectfully, as if to communicate that their function was merely to extract what a Washington big shot wanted to say. Russert goes in for the kill. Here he is interrogating Al Gore in the summer of 2000, following the display of one of his gotcha quotes, this one showing the younger Gore expressing ambivalence about legal abortion:

RUSSERT: When do you think life begins?

GORE: I favor the Roe vs. Wade approach, but let me just say, Tim, I did—

RUSSERT: Which is what? When does life begin?

GORE: Let me just say, I did change my position on the issue of federal funding and I changed it because I came to understand more from women—women think about this differently than men.

RUSSERT: But you were calling fetuses innocent human life, and now you don't believe life begins at conception. I'm just trying to find out, when do you believe life begins?

GORE: Well, look, the Roe vs. Wade decision proposes an answer to that question—

RUSSERT: Which is?

Or, in the same year, as the moderator of a debate between Hillary Clinton and her opponent in the New York Senate race, Rick Lazio, after showing a clip of Clinton's deny-all appearance on the "Today" show just after the Lewinsky scandal broke: "Do you regret misleading the American people? And, secondly, in that same interview, you said that those who were criticizing the

LYING

awake at 4 A.M.
whatever the space beside you holds
you are yourself alone

and whatever there is of truth
turning in crevices light can't touch
it must be that which wakes you

*

in a quiet room a woman works
arranging words, a world
where she might live

it changes little day to day
but the mind is changed
as light changes, as the leaves turn

and whatever holds that space inside her
it is so much harder, vaster, colder
than this near mortal, however breathing, however loved.

—*Constance Merritt*

President were part of a vast right-wing conspiracy. Amongst those eventually criticizing the President was Joe Lieberman. Would you now apologize for branding people as part of a vast right-wing conspiracy?" Clinton seemed for just a moment to lose hold of an experienced politician's repertoire of controlled emotional responses; she looked genuinely upset.

Russert wouldn't be such a big star, though, if he crossed the line into nastiness. He usually takes the dangerous edge off his hostile questions by presenting them as being merely requests for a response to something someone else has said, and he has an instinct for when to pull back from charged moments and return to tough-but-respectful. He jokes with the guest or with the audience—not on every show but often enough for it to stick in our minds—usually about his love of the Buffalo Bills, thereby striking a note not so much of humor as of reassurance and familiarity. Ritualized official combat followed by masculine joshing is deeply embedded in Washington culture—it signals that membership in a community of important people trumps the enmity that the system forces them to act out. Bringing up sports not only lightens the tone, it implies an explicit analogy to the conduct of politics. The Gore interview in 2000 ended with this Beckettian exchange about the Bills' defeat in that year's playoffs by the Tennessee Titans:

RUSSERT: Go, Bills. Forward pass. Go, Bills.
GORE: Bring it on in.
RUSSERT: Go, Bills.
GORE: Here are the ribs, Tim.
RUSSERT: Go, Bills. Go, Bills. Forward pass.

One could, if pressed, tease out a few hints of particularity in Big Russ. His Greatest Generation credentials aren't in perfect order. He was a parachute-packer, not a combat soldier; he never made a jump. His wartime brush with death came when, on a flight to a British resort for R. and R., a pilot foolishly tried to land in heavy fog and crashed, killing several soldier passengers. The best Russert can do by way of paternal material hardship is to evoke the overcrowded conditions on the Queen Mary, which was Big Russ's troopship: "When I think about the crossing, I can't imagine how men of my own generation would have fared on board." Two-thirds of the way into "Big Russ & Me," Russert's mother, a spectre flitting obscurely through these pages, and Big Russ suddenly split up, after thirty years of marriage. Russert neither offers an explanation nor tries to pretty it up—and Big Russ's advice dispensary is soon open for business again—but it's a sign of some deviation from the script.

To the extent that Big Russ has any non-platitudinous beliefs, they are a preoccupation with job security—the private economy as we now understand it doesn't occupy much space on his mental map—and a deep reverence for authority. When a minor transgression gets Russert in trouble with one of the priests at his high school, he protests his innocence to Big Russ. No dice: "His exact words were, 'If Father said you did wrong, you done wrong.' Case closed. No appeal." Russert says his favorite movie is "Cool Hand Luke," but he's anything but a rebel. Toward officialdom he is always respectful, and toward officialdom so high as to border on celebrity he is starstruck. Together, Big Russ and the youthful Russert plan a way of making contact with John F. Kennedy during a Presidential visit to Buffalo. The carefully laid plan works. "I touched him! I touched him!" Russert exultantly reports to his dad; "Finally, a Russert has met a president of the United States," a gratified Big Russ says. (It's interesting that both Bill Clinton and John Kerry also had their own versions of this life-shaping youthful brief encounter with Kennedy.) During the Cuban missile crisis, in the world Big Russ made, Russert approvingly recalls, "nobody even considered being critical of the president during a time of crisis."

The adult Russert, on NBC business, gets an audience with the Pope. "I was awestruck," he reports. "There I was, a former altar boy from South Buffalo in the presence of the Vicar of Christ." The first thing he says is "Bless me, Father." A meeting that Russert recounts at greater length, and with even more fondness if less reverence, was with President Bush and Vice-President Cheney in the White House in the spring of 2001, when he is invited, along with his son Luke, to a

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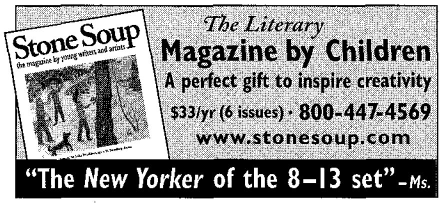
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luncheon for members of the Baseball Hall of Fame. The folks back home may not know that it's an almost universal experience for top-rank Washington journalists to attend official social occasions at the White House, and to treasure the experience, never mind that their onscreen relationship with the Administration is neutral or adversarial. Those at the highest rank can get a private moment in the Oval Office. Bush approaches Luke and asks him to come on back; he pulls in Cheney; they spend a few gleaming minutes talking sports. Afterward, Russert induces Luke to write a thank-you note, in which he says he hopes he can make it to both the Hall of Fame and the Oval Office one day. "The next time I saw the president, I told him about my son's ambitious plans," Russert tells us. "His response was beautiful: 'Never get between a boy and his dreams.' "

Just after the September 11th attacks, Russert bags an interview at Camp David with Cheney. Beforehand, naturally, he calls Big Russ for advice, and it is "Just let him talk. Let him help get us through this." Bingo: "Dad was so right. Without his advice, I would have focused mostly on the future, on our response to terrorism." Instead, though we now know that planning for the war in Iraq was already under way, he had Cheney reminisce about 9/11. On the drive home, he checks back in with Big Russ. "That was great. Thank you," he says. A year later, with war plainly on the horizon, Russert gets another interview with Cheney. The Vice-President's manner—gruff, plainspoken, and perpetually alert to the world's manifold perils—could have been custom-designed to have a positive effect on Big Russ's son. I'm going to put an excerpt from the interview up on the screen, just to show you the distinctly respectful tone that Cheney brings out in Russert:

CHENEY: This just isn't a guy who's now back trying once again to build nuclear weapons. It's the fact that we've also seen him in these other areas, in chemicals, but also especially in biological weapons, increase his capacity to produce and deliver these weapons upon, upon his enemies.

RUSSERT: But if he ever did that, would we not wipe him off the face of the Earth?

CHENEY: Who did the anthrax attack last fall, Tim? We don't know.

RUSSERT: Could it have been Saddam?

CHENEY: I don't know. I don't know who did it. I'm not here today to speculate on or to suggest that he did. My point is that it's the nature of terrorist attacks of these unconventional warfare methods, that it's very hard sometimes to identify who's responsible.

Russert was the first person in his family to go to college. Then he got a law degree and became a political aide, first to Daniel Patrick Moynihan and then to Mario Cuomo, who now look as if they were the last of the great urban white-ethnic Democratic politicians. At one point, he tells us, he came close to working for Leonard Garment, the Republican Washington lawyer-macher. He started in journalism relatively late, and initially as an aide to the president of NBC News, not as a reporter or a producer. After General Electric bought NBC, Jack Welch, G.E.'s chairman, personally appointed Russert Washington bureau chief, and it was a couple of years after that that he became a panelist on "Meet the Press" and, later, the host, replacing Garrick Utley. It wasn't until David Brinkley retired as the host of "This Week," in 1996, that Russert assumed the throne of political-interview television.

The career path that Russert followed is actually quite common in his corner of journalism. The real-American altar boy turned political aide turned TV news-talk host is a capacious category, which includes, besides Russert, Stephanopoulos, Pat Buchanan, and Chris Matthews, among others—several of whom have published books that combine memoir, patriotic sentiment, and personal advice. In the abstract, there is a line separating news and entertainment, and journalism and politics. In real life, in Russert's field, one has to play both a character whom audiences want to invite into their homes and one who is deeply a part of the high-level business of Washington. To be voluble and bright but also an authority figure, to be morally aware but in the end practical, to subject power to the test without undermining it, to question assertively within a conventional frame—that's the job description. Russert fulfills it better than anybody else, and the title character he has created in his book makes for an excellent guide to the rules of this highly particular game. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Lincoln and Whitman, *by Daniel Mark Epstein (Ballantine; $24.95).* During the final two years of the Civil War, Walt Whitman lived in a Spartan rented room a few rutted blocks north of the White House. The poet and the President who inspired his most popular poem ("O Captain! My Captain!") and his most beautiful ("When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd") never met. But Whitman often planted himself along the route of Lincoln's carriage as it rattled to the President's summer retreat, and the two men would exchange grave, friendly nods. Years later, Whitman, palsied but still Jovian, lectured about the great man to a Gilded Age audience that included Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Andrew Carnegie, and General Sherman. Epstein, an accomplished poet as well as a biographer, imbues his tale of two lives with a natural sense of detail and period that revivifies the familiar figures he writes about.

The End of Oil, *by Paul Roberts (Houghton Mifflin; $26).* This dense compendium explores a troubling paradox: the more energy we use, the richer we become, but spiralling consumption also speeds us closer to the economic havoc that will result from the depletion of oil and gas reserves. For political, cultural, and economic reasons (our current energy infrastructure is worth ten trillion dollars), alternatives such as hydrogen, solar, and wind power resist widespread development. Roberts's outspoken but even-handed account closes with four crystal-ball scenarios. In the rosiest, breakthroughs in renewable energy spur a decline in fossil-fuel use; in the direst, Arab resentment at the overthrow of Saddam Hussein leads to the downfall of the Saudi and Kuwaiti regimes, the price of oil rises to fifty dollars a barrel, and the unprepared American economy is left in tatters.

Both, *by Douglas Crase (Pantheon; $25).* The author and his lover, close friends of the late botanist Rupert Barneby, were given several hundred drawings made by Barneby's partner of forty-eight years, Dwight Ripley; here Crase honors that legacy. Ripley and Barneby first met while students at Harrow, united by a mania for plants. (Ripley, for instance, had cultivated a garden containing nothing but parsleys.) Their attachment cost Barneby his inheritance, but the orphaned Ripley had money. They moved to America and fashioned a new family among the artistic élite of New York; Ripley funded the Tibor de Nagy gallery and Barneby continued his taxonomical labors at the New York Botanical Garden. Crase's work, as its title playfully suggests, is itself a kind of reclassification, in which taxonomy becomes poetry, paintings serve as love letters, and gardens rival art. Barneby and Ripley owned a birdcage topped by a fishbowl; from certain angles, the glass sphere appeared to contain bird and fish together. Crase's intricate construction—capturing now one man, now both—is similarly tantalizing.

The Last Sideshow, *by Hanspeter Schneider (Dazed; $29.95).* Gibsonton is a small town on the Gulf Coast of Florida that serves as the off-season refuge—and, increasingly, retirement home—for a community of circus performers and carnival sideshow freaks. Here sympathetic zoning regulations don't penalize you for keeping a roller coaster parked in front of your house or an elephant in the back yard. Schneider's high-contrast black-and-white portraits of Gibsonton residents present the aging members (some now deceased) of a rapidly diminishing tribe: Jeanie Tomaini, the Half Lady, who is the proprietor of the local bait shop; the Welde family, with their tutu-clad dancing bear; and the nonagenarian Human Blockhead hammering giant nails into his right nostril. Tomaini's daughter remarks, "When your father is an eight-foot, four-inch giant and your mother is two feet six inches with no legs, some outsiders think you must have a really weird home life," but these photographs achieve a winning sense of the everyday.

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POP MUSIC

FIREWORKS

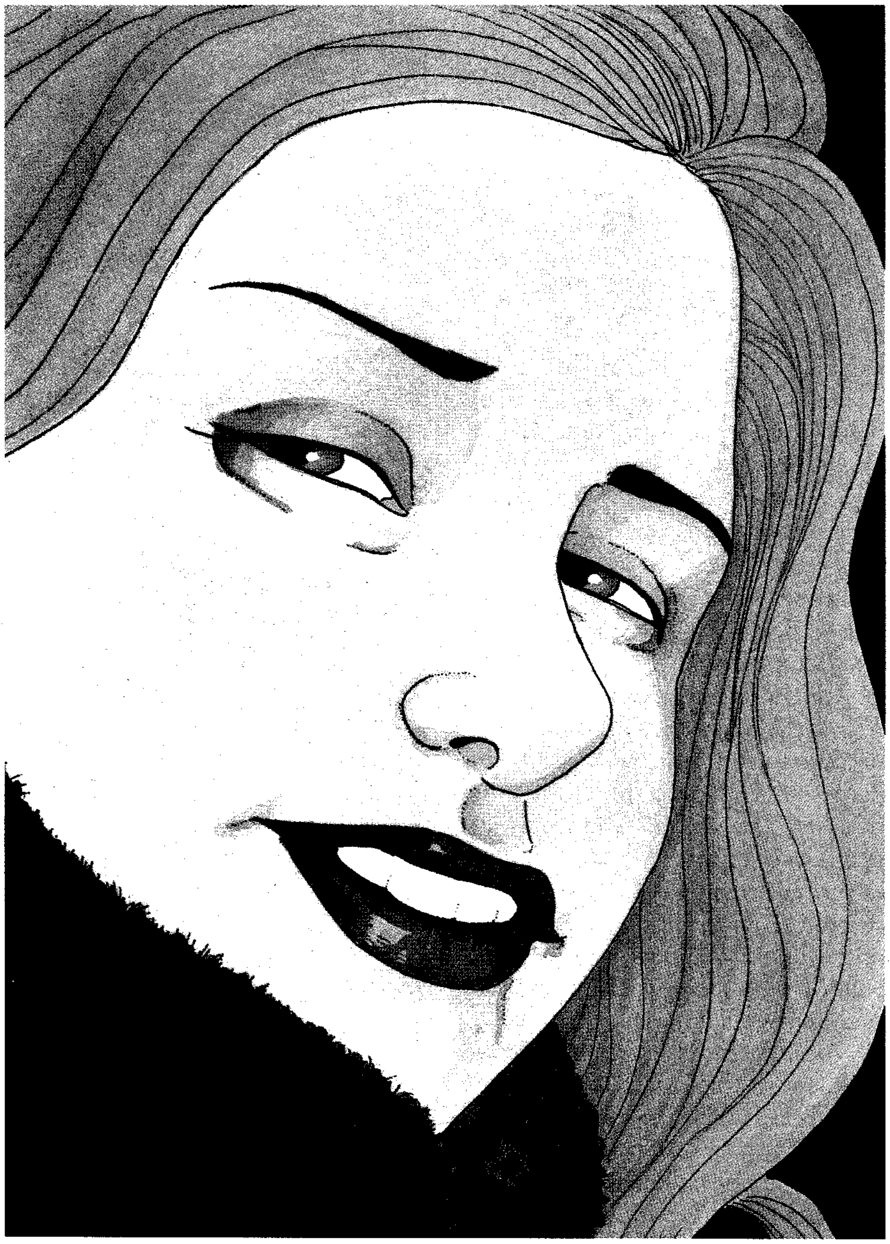
Nellie McKay renews what is old and hurls herself at what is new.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

The nineteen-year-old singer and pianist Nellie McKay has said repeatedly that she wants to be famous, and she has generated a small bible of press clippings to nudge the process along. It's a fun read. McKay pushes her politics (PETA activist, no friend of Bush, "tired of white people") and cherry-picks her rich backstory: a peripatetic childhood, spent travelling with her mother, the actress Robin Pappas, between the Poconos; Olympia, Washington; and Harlem in a Volkswagen bus. Her grandfather did time in San Quentin. In school, Nellie ignored her classmates' musical tastes, wore shoulder pads, and immersed herself in the work of Jo Stafford, Greta Garbo, Doris Day, and Rita Hayworth. After two years at the Manhattan School of Music, she abandoned the conservatory for night clubs, often accompanied by her mother. She relishes using interviews to scare off anyone expecting a biddable camp figure: "I thought all the '50s rockers were so dirty"; "There's a side of me that identifies with Aileen Wuornos"; "I'd really like to raise the minimum wage." She speaks openly about the real-life subject of one of her songs, a conservatory teacher who is both a neighbor in her apartment building and the unwilling object of her obsessive infatuation. It's impossible to determine how much of all this is genuine and how much is just fireworks. (She cites Bill Clinton's saxophone performances as a childhood inspiration.)

Last year, Columbia Records signed McKay and hired Geoff Emerick, the longtime Beatles engineer and Elvis Costello producer, to work on her first album, "Get Away from Me." Oddly, the album takes up two disks, even though the music lasts just an hour. There is no discernible thematic split between the two halves. The only reason it's a double set is that McKay, over the record company's objections, demanded it. She seems to be playing the crazy card—a way to get into the room and turn on all the lights while saying, "Sorry, don't mind me!" Anyone who, like McKay, has watched "Access Hollywood" and MTV's "Driven" knows how these stories often end. The crazy artist winds up dead and famous or, if she's a woman, dead and a footnote. At nineteen, Nellie seems to have figured out the pros and cons of crazy. She tells us as much when she kicks off the album by singing, on the first track, "I ain't got a grip on nothin'," and then begins the final song with this couplet: "Am I mad / Not mad enough." For performers, "crazy" is a category like "cabaret"—it's a rhetorical position, a place to speak from.

McKay does perform in cabarets, but "Get Away from Me" is designed to discourage any genre associations. She sings and plays the piano, yes, but the studio musicians behind her move quickly from style to style: light tropicalia, fast spy-movie music, imitation hip-hop. "David," the song about her former teacher, begins the album with some approximation of a reggae backbeat and a sprinkling of harp playing lifted from a weepy melodrama. When the words start pouring out, anyone hoping for the female Bobby Short will be left behind. Reversing genders, McKay plays Quixote to her high-rise Dulcinea, but she has to move quickly before the restraining order arrives: "David don't you hear me through the wall / waitin' here not makin' a sound." In case we missed her waving the big foam "No. 1 Crazy Person" finger, she re-states her position four songs later, with "Baby Watch Your Back," a clarification of the stalking theme implicit in "David": "Now you walk down the street and I follow / wearing my wig and funny glasses / and I will follow you wherever you go / baby watch your back." Just as the album's title can be read as a barbed response to Norah Jones's mellow "Come Away with Me," McKay's songs are a warning sign to anyone expecting smooth and congruent revivalism.



McKay plays the American id gone wild while the music plays it straight.

LARA TOMLIN

McKay has done standup comedy, and there are moments when she seems merely wacky, but her musical facility buoys up even her lesser moments. Her sweet and handsome voice holds true through all the rants, good jokes, bad jokes, and set pieces. The strings and sparkly arrangements and general trappings of seriousness work remarkably well for someone who likes to puncture seriousness. There's an appealing looseness to the album, as if the musicians were scrambling to keep up with McKay's various gifts. The fabulous mass of vocals on the faux-bossa-nova "Suitcase Song"? All Nellie. The glockenspiel and vibes? Also Nellie. And "Waiter," my favorite song on the album, would fit easily on a Pet Shop Boys album. What was old she renews, and what is new she hurls herself at.

Like Dylan, DJ Shadow, and Jack White, McKay draws from artists outside the present to set herself apart from the crowd—it's a way of raising the bar, pushing herself toward better work. McKay has mentioned Billie Holiday and Dinah Shore in interviews, and in "Change the World" she pleads, "God I'm so German / have to have a plan / please Ethel Merman / help me out of this jam." She has said that she wants to be a part of "my generation," which she makes clear on "Sari," her nominal attempt at rapping. Barely getting the words out, McKay glosses Senator Paul Wellstone and electoral sabotage, and wonders whether she should "listen to Enya's greatest hits / and try to control my hissy fits." She later erupts, Sybil-like, with a hearty "Die, motherfucker!" All of these actions mark her pretty firmly as "current," though one wishes she could rap as well as the jazz-scat trio Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross, which disbanded more than forty years ago.

Politics is where McKay joins her generation most effectively, but the heat takes a moment to rise. "I Wanna Get Married" is a predictable Trojan-horse sendup of Stepford wives. Our unreliable narrator sings what sounds like a classic Peggy Lee song, proudly declaring her outdated goals: "I wanna pack cute little lunches / for my Brady Bunches / then read Danielle Steel." We've heard this before, you're thinking, but just as the song is about to fall, along with its easy targets, the last two lines make good on the premise: "I wanna get married / that's why I was born." It's the concept of biology as destiny, rendered as quick, sugary satire.

"Won't U Please B Nice" is a more complicated piece of role-playing. Brushes shuffle reassuringly on the snare and McKay enters, cooing, "If you would sit / oh so close to me / that would be nice / like it's supposed to be." The gears shift: "If you don't / I'll slit your throat." She plays the American id gone wild while the music plays it straight: "Give me head / or you'll be dead / salute the flag / or I'll call you a fag / so won't u please b nice?" When she wanders from what enrages her, McKay is like a musical sibling in Salinger's Glass family: too smart and too happy about it but too entertaining to ignore. When she's furious, she's effervescent. McKay's anger is a generous muse, and she'd be nuts to lose it. ◆

THE SKY LINE

HIGH-TECH BIBLIOPHILIA

Rem Koolhaas's new library in Seattle is an ennobling public space.

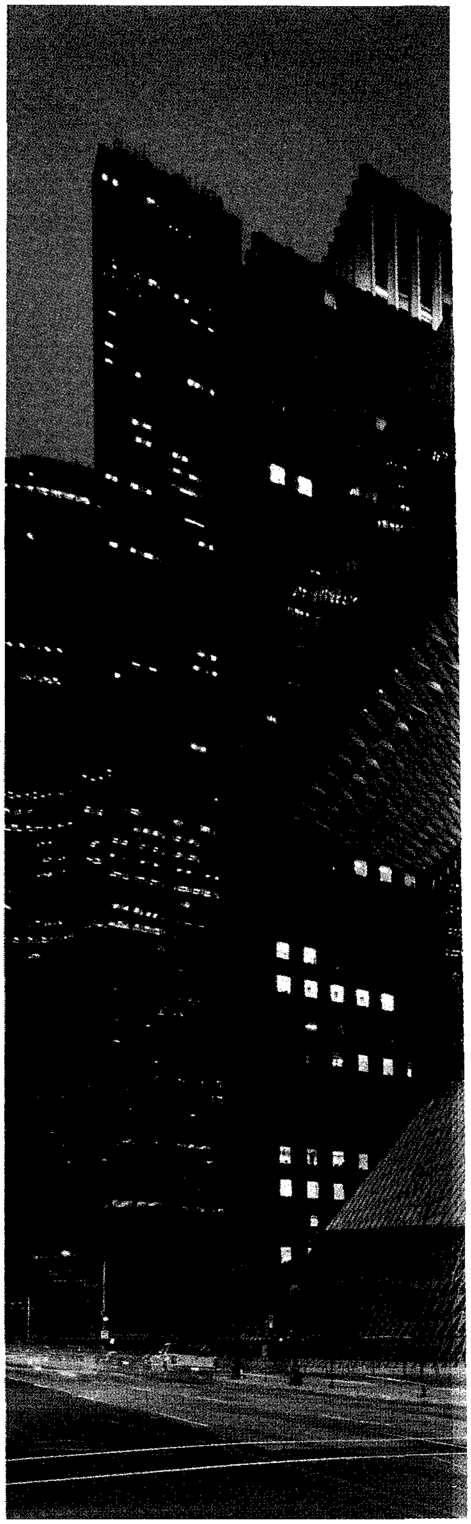
BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

If you wanted to build a new library downtown somewhere, Rem Koolhaas is probably the last architect you would think to hire. For years, Koolhaas has been ranting about how traditional cities don't matter anymore, and how the rise of new technologies has made public space obsolete, and how when people leave their houses the only thing they want to do is shop. His firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, which is based in Rotterdam, wasn't on the original list of architects being considered for a new library in Seattle, but one day in 1999 Koolhaas's partner, Joshua Ramus, who comes from Seattle, got a phone call from his mother saying she had read in the local newspaper that any architect who wanted to be considered should show up the next day for a briefing. Ramus rushed to the airport, flew to Seattle, and eventually the firm got the job.

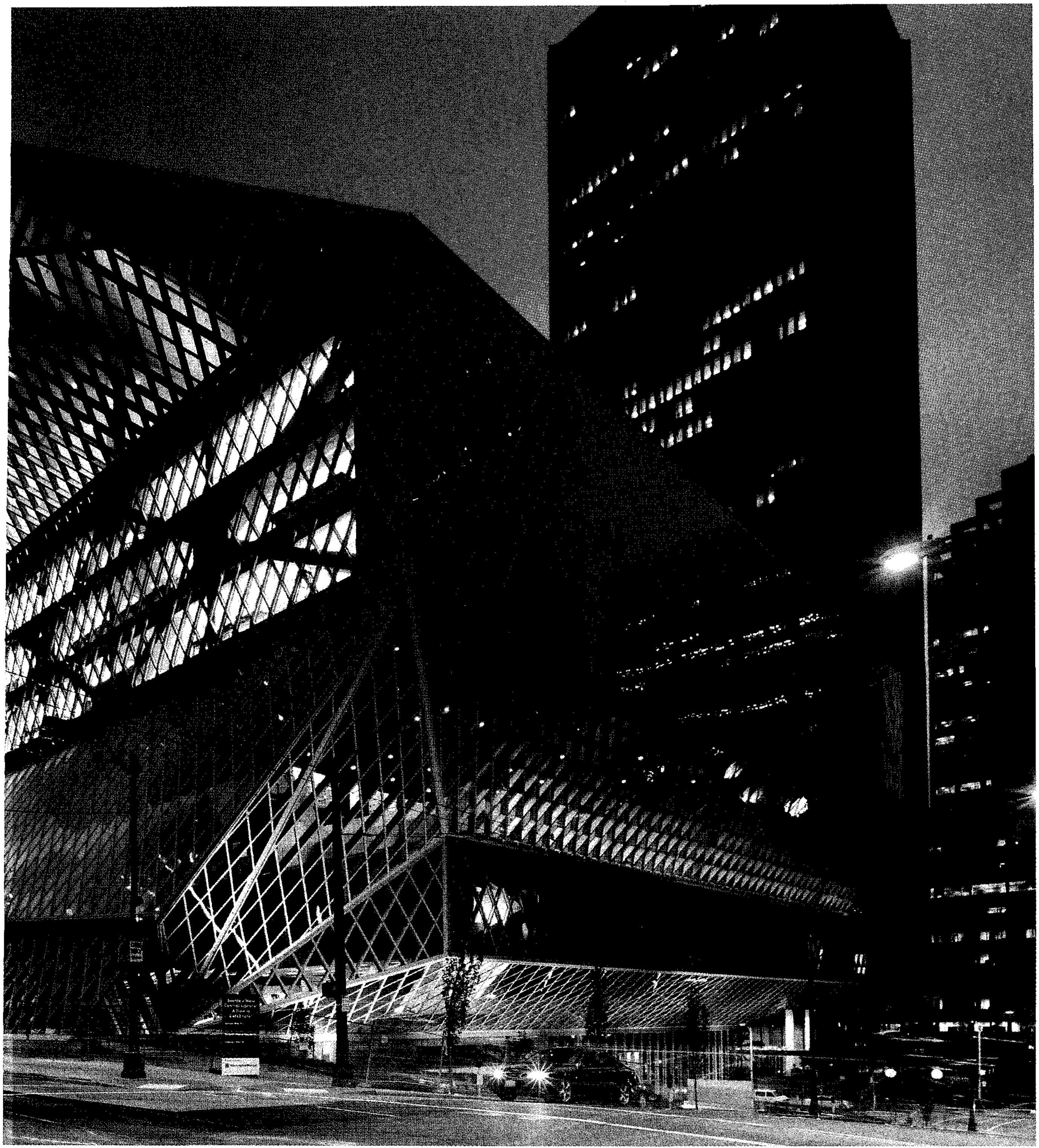
The result is the most important new library to be built in a generation, and the most exhilarating. Koolhaas has always been a better architect than social critic, and the building conveys a sense of the possibility, even the urgency, of public space in the center of a city. The design is not so much a rejection of traditional monumentality as a reinterpretation of it, and it celebrates the culture of the book as passionately, in its way, as does the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue. The Seattle building is thrilling from top to bottom. Koolhaas and Ramus started out by investigating how libraries actually work, and how they are likely to change. They went with Deborah Jacobs, Seattle's chief librarian, and several trustees and staff members to look at libraries around the country, and then they held a series of seminars about the future of the book with scholars and representatives of Microsoft, Amazon, M.I.T.'s Media Lab, and other organizations. They concluded, not surprisingly, that people are not ready to give up on books and that they are not ready to give up on libraries, but that they find most libraries stuffy, confusing, and uninviting. Patrons wanted a more user-friendly institution, and librarians wanted one that was more flexible, and would not require constant rearrangement as collections expanded.

The architects saw that in most older libraries, where books are stored on rows of shelves on separate floors, collections are arbitrarily broken apart, depending on the amount of space available on each floor. But since the Dewey Decimal System is a continuous series of numbers, they reasoned, why couldn't books be stored on a continuous series of shelves? And what if the shelves wound up and up, in a spiral? They saw that it was possible to design stacks in the manner of a parking garage, with slanted floors joined in a series of zigzagging ramps. The stacks, which the architects named the Spiral, take up the equivalent of four floors in the middle of the eleven-story building. They are open, which means that you can browse. You get to the Spiral via a chartreuse-colored escalator and stairway that slices through the middle of the ramped floors. (All vertical circulation in the building, including the elevator cabs, is chartreuse.)

Above the stacks area, on the tenth floor, is a spectacular reading room, with slanted glass walls. The room has an unusual perspective on the Seattle skyline, since the library building is surrounded by skyscrapers, and the waters of Elliott Bay are visible only between the towers. The soaring glass shed is as spectacular, in its way, as the Rose Main Reading Room in the Fifth Avenue library. Just below the stacks is a room full of computers. Koolhaas calls it the Mixing Chamber, which sounds more high-tech and radical than it really is. The Mixing Chamber is simply a reinterpretation of the traditional library reference room. People who visit it are directed to the books they need. Koolhaas's verbiage is always a little annoying. He calls an expansive, atrium-style lobby the Living Room. The Living Room is a splendid vestibule that anoints the act of reading with grandeur and civic pride, and Seattle is lucky to have it. But what Koolhaas has done here is not so different, in its way, from what Carrère & Hastings were trying to achieve



Koolhaas designed the library as a series of bo



rapped in a glass-and-steel skin. The stacks of books are at the center, under the reading room. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

when they put Astor Hall at the entrance to the New York Public Library.

I thought of the Carrère & Hastings building often as I walked through the Seattle library. Two buildings could not possibly look less alike, but both were born of a marriage of earnestness and opulence. When the library on Fifth Avenue was finished, in 1911, a grand library that was free to the public was still a fresh, almost radical notion, and the architecture was intended to give it gravitas. In the same way that McKim, Mead & White designed the original Pennsylvania Station to confer a kind of nobility on the act of entering and leaving the city, Carrère & Hastings expected the public library not only to house books but to dignify the act of seeking them out.

Koolhaas and Ramus did not pretend that the world is unchanged since 1911—a view that held sway in Chicago a few years ago when a huge new central library designed by the architect Thomas Beeby went up. It looks vaguely like a nineteenth-century train station and is overbearing and bombastic. The complex polygonal form of the Seattle library, which is sheathed almost entirely

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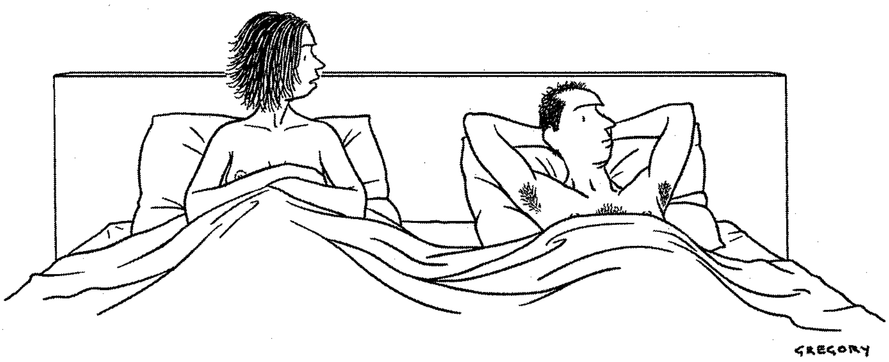
in glass set in a diamond-shaped grid, has a dazzling energy; it's the most alluring architectural object to arrive in this city's downtown since the Space Needle. The building manages the neat trick of seeming exotic but not bizarre. Once you have walked around the block a couple of times, it seems almost conventional. In a few years, the great glass tent will connote the appeal of reading as much as New York's marble lions do. It's significant that the building was put up in the land of Microsoft (and with some of the company's money), since it is such a powerful testament to architecture as a container for the delivery of information. We don't need big library buildings the way we once did, but if you surf the Internet at home you are just a click away from a video game. When you do it here, you feel that you are engaged in a serious pursuit. A building like this emphasizes the value a culture places on literacy. (It cost a hundred and sixty-five million dollars, most of which was paid by voter-approved city bonds.)

The library, for which the Seattle firm of LMN Architects served as associate designer, is clearly organized and will be easy to use. When Koolhaas and Ramus designed the building, they did what architects often do—they made a diagram. It was, essentially, five boxes: the book stacks were one box, the administrative offices were another, and there were boxes for staff work areas, meeting rooms, and below-ground parking. Then they did something remarkable. For all intents and purposes, they built the diagram. They sketched the boxes floating in space and placed the large public areas—the Living Room, the Mixing Chamber, and the Reading Room—above and below them, surrounded by glass. Turning a diagram into an actual architectural form seems like something of a parlor trick, not to mention being crudely indifferent to aesthetics. In fact, it was neither of these things. The building has a logic to it: functional sections are the starting point, but they are placed so that the spaces between them are large enough and spectacular enough to produce powerful architectural effects. The glass skin is thrown over the entire structure, like a blanket. The diamond pattern in the skin is actually seismic bracing, engineered to protect the building in the event of an earthquake or strong winds.

Deborah Jacobs seems to have been about as close to an ideal client as could be imagined, and she protected the architects from some of their worst instincts. She rejected the green-colored, unfinished Sheetrock that they had used in other recent projects, including the Prada store in New York, on the ground that it was trite and cheap-looking. "I thought it was important that you have a sense of awe when you come into a public building, especially a library," she said. But she had no interest in a traditional building: "This is the first library of the twenty-first century." Jacobs analyzed every aspect of the library's operations, and insisted that there be no compromise in accommodating them. When the library's trustees saw Koolhaas and Ramus's first design, they were relieved to find that the building fulfilled all the practical demands that had been set. The architects presented the building as a reinvention of the idea of the public library, which in many ways it is. Their greatest achievement, though, is not in reinventing the library but in reaffirming it. ♦



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DANCING

SYLVIA GROWS UP

Mark Morris remakes a ballet.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

The great surprise, and much of the beauty, of Mark Morris's new "Sylvia," for San Francisco Ballet—it opened late last month at the War Memorial Opera House—is that Morris took the ballet's story completely seriously. "Sylvia," based on a sixteenth-century verse play, "Aminta," by Torquato Tasso, is a pastoral. The heroine, Sylvia, is a huntress nymph pledged to the goddess Diana—that is, to chastity. But the virtuous shepherd Aminta fancies her. To help him, Eros, or Cupid, shoots her with one of his magic arrows, causing her to fall in love with the boy. There's a problem, though: shortly beforehand, Sylvia, annoyed by Aminta's attentions, shot him with one of her regular arrows, and he is now lying dead (presumably) on the floor. Nor does she have time to ponder this difficulty, for an evil huntsman, Orion, who is also in love with her, arrives on the scene and carries her off to his cave, where she has to spend Act II getting him drunk, so as not to lose her virtue. Finally, Eros springs her from the cave, and, in Act III, everyone goes off to the city, where—after the arrival of a pirate ship, an argument between Eros and Diana, and various other events—Sylvia and the newly resuscitated Aminta are united, and everyone dances for joy.

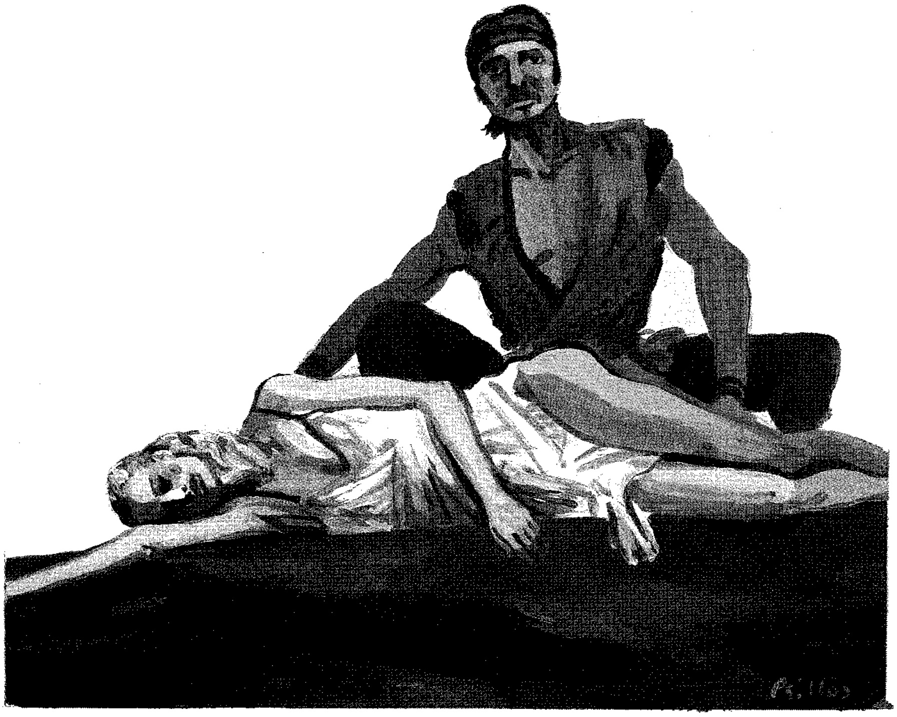
When the original "Sylvia" had its première, at the Paris Opéra, in 1876, it got a so-so reception, and it would probably soon have been retired and forgotten but for its splendid score, by Léo Delibes, which is full of lyric ravishment and, at the same time, symphonic depth: rhythmic complexity, dramatic force, and, above all, gorgeous French orchestrations. Armed with such music, "Sylvia" could not easily die. There were versions in Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg; the Paris Opéra mounted new productions over the years; Frederick Ashton did a "Sylvia," starring Margot Fonteyn, for Sadler's Wells, in London, in 1952. (This last will be revived by the Royal Ballet in November, in honor of the centenary of Ashton's birth.) But, according to the history books, the judgment on many "Sylvia"s was that, while the score was wonderful, the story was stupid.

Enter Mark Morris, among whose curious combination of artistic gifts is a childlike attachment to old stories. Often, however, he has combined that true-heartedness with a cackling irreverence. (See especially "The Hard Nut," his version of "The Nutcracker.") In his pieces, faith wins, but not without strenuous testing. And so when the word got out that Morris was doing a "Sylvia"—the first American production of the ballet—it was widely assumed that he was going to have some fun with those nymphs and shepherds.

He doesn't. He takes the story straight—straighter, I think, than any libretto he has worked with before. Yes, he shows us a few things that would not have occurred at the Paris Opéra in 1876. When Orion gets on Sylvia's nerves, she tries to sock him in the face. Elsewhere, people tumble onto the floor, or hoist each other into the air with a big, deep breath. Here we see the happy, meaty physicality that is Morris's trademark and that no amount of deference to an old tale will ever stiffen out of him. "Sylvia" also has what may be a few postmodern touches, clear invocations of canonical nineteenth-century ballets such as "Giselle" and "La Bayadère." But these quotes have no quote marks—no set-off-ness, no irony—so, again, they may just be part of Morris's homage to the old days. The same can be said of the sets, by Allen Moyer, which are based on French nineteenth-century panoramic wallpaper. They are thus artificial, but in a good way: an American modernist's tribute to the French nineteenth century's tribute to ancient Greece. (Martin Pakledinaz's costumes are more frankly Greek, and lovely.) As a final mark of respect, absolutely no cuts were made in the music. We therefore spend a little more time watching the love games of the satyrs and dryads than we might have wanted to, but it's worth it, to hear the whole score at last.

Much of Morris's work as director seems to have been aimed at making the ballet's story clear, in a classical way. Even in his wild-man youth, Morris was always fastidious about structure. His dancers might have been performing in their underpants, but they did so in well-marked divisions of time, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. "Sylvia" 's libretto is already classical. The progress from Act I to Act II to Act III is the progress from the woods to the cave to the city—that is, from nature to Hell to civilization. Morris has taken this nice triadic form and run with it. His Act I forest, in James Ingalls's lighting, is pretty but spooky, with dark spots and shiny spots—a vision of nature in which, as in human nature, anything can happen. In Act II, the darkness wins, or threatens to: Sylvia has to fight off not just Orion but his eight attendant goons, who storm around wearing what look like brown cauls on their heads—a revolting sight—and sticking their fingers in their mouths. According to classical wisdom, that's what life could be like if we didn't have—presto!—Act III, which takes place against the backdrop of a Greek city, with column-fronted temples: nature rationalized. The progression is further underscored by the differing dance styles of the three acts. The movement in Act I is quick, pointy, mercurial. Act II is heavy, plastic, realistic—modern dance, almost. Act III is fully, ceremoniously classical: ballet in all its robes. Those contrasts are especially evident in Sylvia's dancing, and hence in the development of her character. In the forest, she darts and skims. In the cave, she has to descend to some thrashing and kicking. By Act III, she has learned to dance grandly and slowly, which is the hardest thing to do. She has grown up.

But the most classical thing about "Sylvia" is the amount of ballet it contains. Though Morris is known primarily as a modern-dance choreographer, he made his first ballet when he was fifteen, and throughout his career he has taken time off from his modern-dance troupe to create pieces for ballet companies. In nearly all his ballets, however, you could detect a modern-dance base—gravity, naturalism, the flesh, the floor. "Sylvia" is different. This thing really looks like a ballet. There is the standard ballet hierarchy: principal dancers, soloists, ensemble. There is the standard ballet bill of fare: national dances, character dances, classical dances. In the grand pas de deux, there is the standard structure: adagio, variations, coda. Of course, this is partly because Morris was making a new version of an old ballet. Old ballet, old rules. But the choreography doesn't look historicist; it looks newborn. The best of the character dances are for Eros, who performs a thousand marvels: strange little hops and tilts, Sufi-esque spins, dainty Harlequin jumps landing in deep, egg-laying pliés. More amazing, however, is what Morris has made of the straight classical vocabulary—the complications he has invented, the rhythmic variations, the wonderful reversals where, with a swivel of the pelvis, a step that was one thing, going one way, becomes something else, going the other way. These steps are hard, but the San Francisco troupe, under the eighteen-year directorship of Helgi Tomasson, has become very strong. From a company of seventy-one, Morris was able to assemble four different casts to do his grand-master assignments. Indeed, he pulled two of his leading ladies out of the corps, and one of them, Elizabeth Miner, was the best of the three Sylvias I saw.



Elizabeth Miner as Sylvia and Pierre-François Vilanoba as Orion.

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

In its classicism, "Sylvia" could start a fashion. The big ballet companies are always crying out for three-act story ballets, because that's what the public wants. And what they end up with, usually, is either some same-old revision of "Giselle" or "Swan Lake" (the San Francisco troupe has these) or the opposite, a new-style, lurid, hauling-the-girls-by-the-crotch melodrama (San Francisco also has one of these, Lar Lubovitch's "Othello"). "Sylvia" could point a new way: both purely classical—a symbol, not a soap opera—and also serious.

It is serious. Its characters may be conventional—chaste huntress, lovestruck shepherd, hairy villain—but Morris has made them interesting, troubled, self-contradictory. Sylvia is admirable—Morris exclaimed to the press over what an excellent feminist she was—but she is hard. Aminta is a nice boy, but a weakling. It is Eros, not Aminta, who rescues Sylvia from Orion's cave, and when, upon her release, she finds Aminta again he is sitting on a swing, presumably waiting to see how things turn out. Orion may be a monster, but he is in love; his arm-sweeping choreography tells us that. His attendants are repulsive, but also funny and sort of cute, like the seven dwarfs.

The story, too, is a mixed business. Morris may have bent his mind to "Sylvia" 's wisdom, which is the world's wisdom: that if we would all just grow up and get married—come out of the woods, move to the city—we would do O.K. But he takes this lesson broadly, as a fable about balance and compromise, and he doesn't forget to tell us that compromise means sacrifice. When Eros brings Aminta back from death, there is a sad moment. Eros runs his hand tenderly down Aminta's leg. He loves him. Aminta, still only half-conscious, embraces Eros's neck. Then he opens his eyes and draws back in horror. This isn't the person he wants; he wants Sylvia. Eros politely withdraws. About five minutes later, in Orion's cave, exactly the same sequence of events occurs between Orion and Sylvia, who has fainted: hand down the leg, arm around the neck, then the awakening and the recoil. That's all right: Sylvia and Aminta need to end up with each other, not with a god or an evil huntsman. Still, the god and the huntsman show them more real feeling—at least until the matrimonial Act III—than they ever show each other. As people grow up and pair off, Morris is saying, hearts get broken. Nor are the pairings necessarily ideal. (In all the casts I saw, Orion was a far more charismatic fellow than Aminta. Pierre-François Vilanoba, in particular, was a smolderer.) Life is arbitrary; things just happen. Cupid shoots you with an arrow, you fall in love, and that's what you're stuck with, until you die. Meanwhile, you have left some truth, some other love, behind, in the dark forest. This tragic note is present in all great comedy. Morris doesn't insist on it, doesn't let it interfere with the general cheer. But by adding it he has thickened the story, deepened it, and thus made little "Sylvia" great. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

CREATING MONSTERS

“Van Helsing” and “Control Room.”

BY ANTHONY LANE

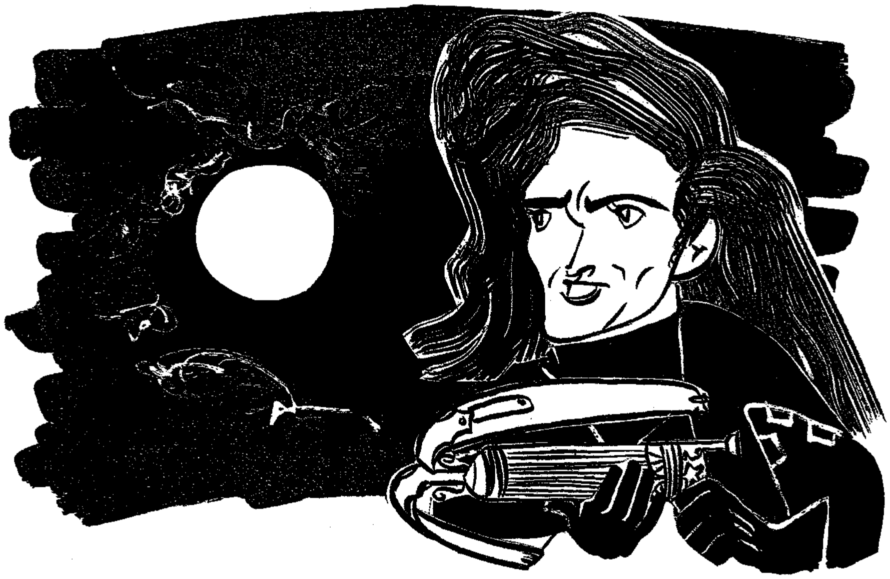
So there you are, trotting along in your horse-drawn carriage in the year 1888. It is a pleasant scene, although you might have chosen not to find your left-hand wheels spinning vainly over the brink of a ravine. The fact that the carriage itself has exploded into flames could also be thought disagreeable. And, while polite society would applaud the presence of a beautiful young woman inside the carriage, eyebrows would be raised at the gentleman accompanying her, who seems to have been bolted and stitched together from portions of other gentlemen. Oh, and there is one other matter: some form of wolverine, as large as a shire horse but rather less placid, has leaped onto the rear of the carriage and is making a concerted effort to join the party.

By the standard of “Van Helsing,” this rates as one of the quieter moments. The film was directed by Stephen Sommers, or, as the final credits amusingly suggest, “written and directed by Stephen Sommers.” What the movie offers is not so much a plot as the visual equivalent of a compilation album: The Very Best of Gothic Horror. A selection of popular ghouls has been rounded up and herded sheepishly into a single time frame. Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein” was published in 1818, but her poor monster, as if he hadn’t got enough on his plate, is spirited to the other end of the century; the opening sequence finds him strapped to a table in the Transylvanian castle of Count Dracula, while a mob of churls batters through the gates in protest against genetically modified men. We then jump to Paris, a year later, and to the most authentic detail in the whole film: the distant stump of a half-built Eiffel Tower. A misshapen fellow is hanging out at the top of Notre-Dame—not Quasimodo but a swollen Mr. Hyde, if you please, who now looks and sounds like a malevolent Shrek.

What are we supposed to make of this unholy gathering? Well, given that one of the first lines we hear is “It’s alive!,” we can be fairly certain that Sommers wished to pay homage to James Whale, Tod Browning, and other founding fathers of the horror film. On a practical level, this allows the movie’s hero, Gabriel Van Helsing (Hugh Jackman), to arrange his targets within a limited area. He is a slayer of nasties; more surprisingly, he is in the employment of the Catholic Church, which summons him to Rome and instructs him to invade Transylvania, with or without a U.N. mandate. He will be accompanied by a young friar named Carl (David Wenham), who, much as Q likes to brief a skeptical 007, gives Van Helsing a guided tour of the Vatican’s underground weapons facility. Armed with a rapid-fire crossbow and a holy-water cannister, our man heads east, into a stew of evils. There will be bloodsuckers, there will be werewolves, and, most impenetrable of all, there will be bad Romanian accents.

Dracula (Richard Roxburgh) resides in a cloud-piercing fortress that would be even more forbidding were it not so evidently built on a computer screen. He is aided by a trio of flight attendants—friendly female neck-biters who either dress like Barbara Eden in “I Dream of Jeannie” or, during periods of darkness, turn into nude white mice with wings. Considering how much flesh is on display, “Van Helsing” is a remarkably sexless affair; even the cheapest Hammer horror flick, with its quivering polystyrene sets and ketchup-tipped canines, had the wit to linger over the erotic implications of a bared throat, whereas Sommers doesn’t want to know, and the libidos of his teen-age viewers, which might have been fruitfully ruffled by the sight of vampires exchanging fluids with virgins, will be left undisturbed.

Indeed, you wonder what youthful viewers will get from this movie. Any reference to Boris Karloff or Bela Lugosi will sail over their heads, and they will never know the loaded, entrancing silence in which those superior monsters advanced upon their prey. I suspect that they will regard “Van Helsing” as a low-budget trailer for the real business of the moment, which is “Van Helsing” the Xbox game, available now for $49.99. I have not yet had the pleasure of its company, but the promises made by the manufacturer are stirring to behold: “Unlock hidden content when you play through three different difficulty modes.” This has to be an improvement on the movie, which has virtually no content at all, hidden or otherwise, and whose only mode of difficulty arises when Hugh Jackman has to shout to make himself



Hugh Jackman, on assignment in Transylvania.

TOM BACHTELL

heard above the screech of the flight attendants.

Jackman is a hearty soul, but, unlike Brendan Fraser in "The Mummy," Sommers's earlier and zippier tribute to thrills past, he can make no headway against the forces of digital disorder. Then, there is Kate Beckinsale, whose unhappy purpose, here as in "Pearl Harbor," is to provide what I hesitate to call the love interest. She plays Anna Valerious, whose name would bring intense pleasure to a writer of limericks, and whose attitude toward lycanthropes resembles that of Brigitte Bardot toward stray dogs. Van Helsing: "He's a werewolf—he's going to kill people." Anna: "He can't help it!" They eventually reach Dracula's lair by stretching out their hands and passing through a looking glass, a feat borrowed from Cocteau's "Orphée." But Cocteau was careful to plant his magic in the realm of ordinary objects (his underworld was run by a committee of men who dressed and spoke like bank managers), whereas "Van Helsing" uproots its characters from anything—a place, a turn of phrase, a strain of feeling—that we would recognize from our own lives, feverishly piling legend upon legend, and beast upon beast, without realizing that, far from adding to the strangeness, they will cancel one another out. The horror flick, at its height, was a lyrical caressing of our fears; by the end of this nonsense, you fear for the well-being of the genre. "It's dead!"

To release a documentary about Al Jazeera, the Arab television station, at this particular moment requires a certain style. "Control Room," directed by Jehane Noujaim, and set during the Coalition forces' storming of Iraq, divides its time between Doha, Qatar, where Al Jazeera has its headquarters, and the nearby Media Center at the United States Central Command, or CENTCOM. There is no narrator; rather, we are invited to eavesdrop on—or to get an earful from—such figures as Hassan Ibrahim, a jovial reporter with Al Jazeera, and Samir Khader, one of the network's senior producers. Seldom seen without his coffee and cigarette (the weaponry of choice for every ironist from Paris to Kabul), Khader is a type of whom documentarians dream: professionally acerbic, philosophically fatigued. The message of Al Jazeera, he claims,

> is to educate the Arab masses in something called democracy. . . . To shake up these rigid societies, to awaken them, to tell them: Wake up, wake up, there is a world around you, something is happening in the world, you are still sleeping, *wake up*.

That would get a load of heads nodding on Capitol Hill, as would Khader's express wish to send his children to college in America and have them settle there for good. There is a lovely mirror image of these sentiments in the fresh countenance of Lieutenant Josh Rushing, a U.S. Army press officer, who argues the case for the Coalition while plainly becoming intrigued by the other side of the argument and helplessly befriending Arab journalists. One of them declares, in return, "I'm so thankful because I'm not a girl, because I fall in love with him directly." It may be raining fire in Baghdad, but down at CENTCOM it's like the Summer of Love.

"Control Room" takes on the bristling question of journalistic balance and pretty much throws up its hands. In the words of one Al Jazeera employee, "This word 'objectivity' is almost a mirage." Still, given that most Americans know the network only by reputation, or via Donald Rumsfeld's public denunciations of it, a little more objective information would not have gone amiss. Having seen this documentary, I am still unable to describe the shape of Al Jazeera's schedules: does it deliver a twenty-four-hour news service, or are there other kinds of programs? We are told that "the mouthpiece of Osama bin Laden," as the network has been labelled in Washington, has run into trouble with several Arab states for chastising their regimes, but those countries—including Bahrain, Jordan, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia—are not identified. We are loosely shown who runs Al Jazeera, but not who owns or funds it; there is no mention, for instance, of the Emir of Qatar.

For all the courtesy and humor of Al Jazeera's personnel, few of the grievances that the Administration harbored against it will be allayed by this movie. For one thing, it replays President Bush's stated demand from March, 2003, after American soldiers had been taken by the enemy: "The P.O.W.s I expect to be treated humanely, just like we're treating the prisoners that we have captured humanely." Nobody likes to be haunted by his own words, and, when the President was interviewed on Arab TV, a couple of weeks ago, he spoke to two channels other than Al Jazeera. That was a slap on the wrist, no question; but what price a slap, when you miss out on forty million viewers? ♦

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THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL SLANSKY

THE TWELFTH HUNDRED DAYS: THE QUIZ

1. Three of these statements were made by George W. Bush during his February interview with Tim Russert. Which one did he make at his April press conference?

(a) "The American people need to know they got a President who sees the world the way it is."

(b) "In my judgment, when the United States says there will be serious consequences, and if there isn't serious consequences, it creates adverse consequences."

(c) "Nobody likes to see dead people on their television screens."

(d) "I don't think America can stand by and hope for the best from a madman."

2. What did Karl Rove say he wished had been done differently?

(a) He wished that Condoleezza Rice had fired Dick Clarke on January 21, 2001.

(b) He wished that Paul Wolfowitz had known exactly how many U.S. troops had died in Iraq, instead of underestimating the number by more than two hundred.

(c) He wished that the "Mission Accomplished" banner had not been raised on that aircraft carrier.

(d) He wished that Fabian Basabe, the Ecuadoran socialite wanted in California on three warrants for speeding, driving under the influence, and trespassing, had not been pictured on the front page of the *Daily News* "dirty dancing" with the President's daughter Barbara.

According to various recent books about the Bush Administration, who did what?

3. Dick Cheney.
4. Donald Rumsfeld.
5. Paul Wolfowitz.
6. George Tenet.

(a) Complained that a pre-9/11 White House meeting about terrorism was spending too much time on "this one man, bin Laden."

(b) Responded to the suggestion that the government couldn't afford any more tax cuts for the wealthy as follows: "We won the midterms. This is our due."

(c) Argued for post-9/11 bombing strikes against Iraq instead of Afghanistan, even though Afghanistan was linked to bin Laden and Iraq wasn't, saying that Iraq had better targets.

(d) Threw up his arms and declared that Iraq's possessing weapons of mass destruction was "a slam dunk."

RICHARD THOMPSON

7. Complete George W. Bush's statement: "I believe that ___ can self-govern."

(a) folks who have lived under dictators or torturers

(b) people whose skins aren't necessarily—are a different color than white

(c) only those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior

(d) under certain circumstances, even wild animals

8. In a speech covered by CNN, Dick Cheney's attacks on John Kerry as a threat to America's security were broadcast, on a split screen, alongside what kind of images?

(a) Scenes of soldiers' coffins being carried off of military planes.

(b) Scenes of Cheney shotgunning pheasants.

(c) Scenes of the devastation in Baghdad following a hotel bombing.

(d) Scenes of George W. Bush playing golf in Texas the day after receiving the "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S." briefing.

9. Why did President Bush say that he wanted the 9/11 commission to meet with him and Dick Cheney together?

(a) He wanted to have the Vice-President on hand in case he started to make jokes about weapons of mass destruction, as he'd done at a dinner for broadcast journalists.

(b) He wanted the commissioners to "see our body language."

(c) Ever since the Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar had told him, "You're nearly as unpopular as Ronald Reagan was," he needed moral support in public.

(d) He was worried that the commissioners would ask him why John Ashcroft had not included counter-terrorism in his May, 2001, memo listing the new Justice Department's top priorities.

10. What was George W. Bush's response when Bob Woodward asked how he thought history would judge the Iraq war?

(a) "I say that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is God's gift to everybody in the world. I believe that. As a matter of fact, I was the person that wrote the line, or said it. I didn't write it, I just said it in a speech. And it became part of the jargon."

(b) "When you're marching to war, it's not a very optimistic thought."

(c) "You can't see what you think is a threat and hope it goes away. You used to could when the oceans protected us. But the lesson of September the eleventh is, is when the President sees a threat we must deal with it before it comes to fruition, through death, on our own soils, for example."

(d) "We won't know. We'll all be dead."

Answers:
(1) c, (2) c, (3) b, (4) c, (5) a, (6) d, (7) b, (8) c,
(9) b, (10) d.

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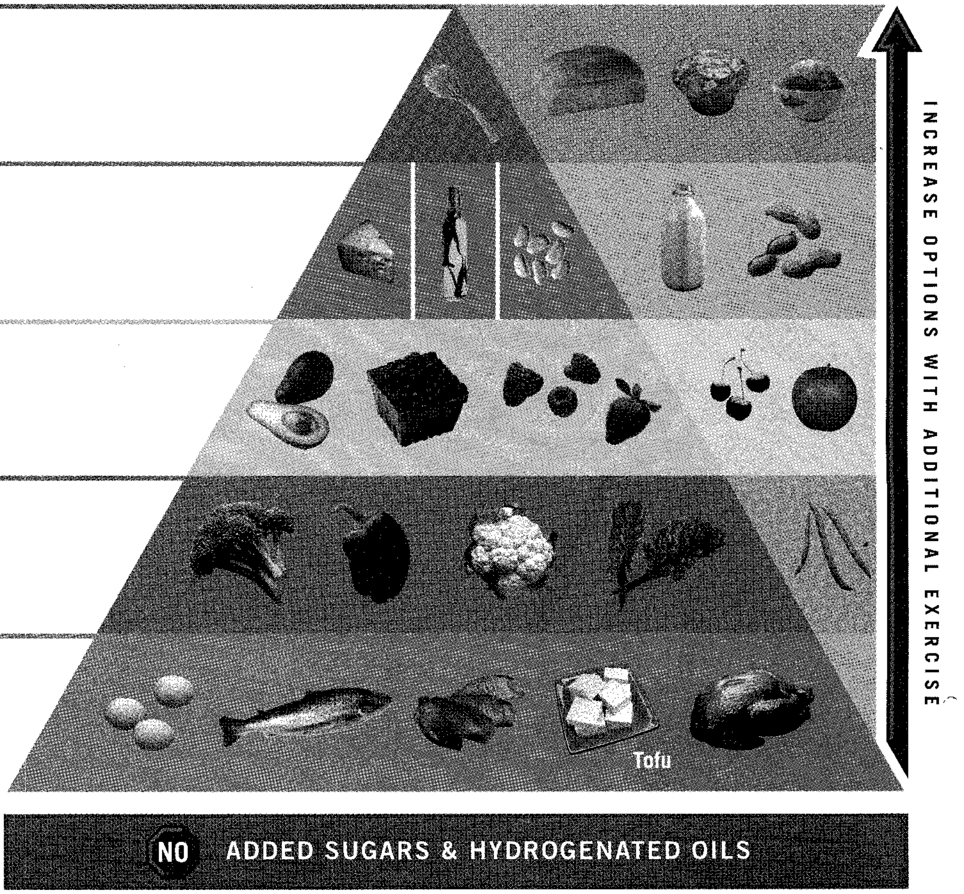
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